

Together in UNISON

UNISON National Women's
Committee
Annual Report 2016/17

National Women's Committee Annual Report 2016/17

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Introduction

A very warm welcome to the national women's conference. I hope that you will find your time in Brighton interesting, informative and inspiring, that you enjoy conference and make the most of the opportunity to meet sister activists and friends - old and new.

It has been an honour to chair the committee over the last 12 months. However, it has been a challenging year for the trade union movement – from Brexit to Trump this year has definitely been full of shocks.

As the UK prepares to leave the EU there is much work to be done by the trade union movement to ensure that the hard fought for equalities legislation and workers' rights are not peeled back by a Conservative government. It is important that UNISON women are at the forefront of that fight as despite her warm words, our new prime minister, Theresa May is no friend of the workers.

We have had successive Westminster governments who have focused on reducing the public sector and destroying the welfare state in the name of austerity. Governments full of millionaires that are so far removed from reality, that they are untouched by the spread of foodbanks, the increase in zero hours contracts or the destitution their welfare changes have caused. Despite a change of chancellor, austerity lives on and the cuts will continue to directly impact our members and the communities they support.

Our conference brings together the very people who form the backbone of the movement – women now make up over 78% of UNISON, that is why our conference is so very important. It brings together women from public, private, community and voluntary sectors representing a wide range of workplaces. Our agenda represents the depth and diversity of the hopes and challenges faced by women throughout the UK and internationally.

Our conference sets the work plan for the women's committee for the next 12 months. The motions that are carried form the basis of everything we do going forward. However, what is more important is the experiences you share with us as part of your speeches and contributions to the conference. When we meet with policy makers and politicians we use your experiences to provide the evidence we need to demand and to drive change for the better.

There is some serious business to be done here at conference, but please remember there is also space and time for networking and fun. I look forward to all of the debates at conference, to hearing your many stories, and to working alongside you to create a better society for all women.

I hope you enjoy and participate fully in the conference, and, once again, welcome.

Davena Rankin
Chair, national women's committee

Remembering Eric



In November, our president, Eric Roberts sadly passed away. Eric was so proud to have been elected as our president and was a loyal and hard working activist. He was a warm, kind man. He is a huge loss to our union, and I will miss him.

Davena Rankin, national women's committee chair

Eric is pictured left at national women's conference in 2016, which he attended as vice president.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE ACTION ON CONFERENCE DECISIONS 2016

The work of the national women's committee is underpinned by UNISON's objectives and priorities:

UNISON's Objectives

UNISON's main priority for 2016 will be to respond to the threats posed by the Trade Union Bill/Act. Our objectives are to:

- Enhance our capability to meet the recruiting, organisational and representational challenges posed by austerity measures including cuts, workforce reductions, reorganisations, attacks on facility time and privatisation. Ensuring the union is relevant to all members who provide public services – including those who work in the private sector – regardless of the economic sector in which they work.
- Protect and secure fair pay and terms and conditions, high quality employment, and pensions for UNISON members, building confidence for industrial action when required. Promoting equality and challenging all forms of discrimination, including racism, supporting migrant workers, and promoting UNISON's alternative.
- Develop our public service campaigns in support of quality public services, in defence of the NHS, and all public services, building our political influence, forging alliances with unions, appropriate campaigning and community groups to challenge the austerity programme, including challenging the attacks on the welfare state. To campaign for the election of governments in Westminster, and the devolved nations, which value public services and working people, rejecting the arguments of UKIP and other far-right parties.

- Ensure that the union's structures including organisational, lay member, ICT infrastructure and internal management systems are efficient and effective to meet the changing needs of all sections of the union and its members.

The workplan is also formulated by consideration of the decisions taken at national women's conference. The committee does not work in isolation, but with the regional women's groups and networks, other departments and committees in the union, and in partnership with organisations who share our aims.

This report summarises that work, and hopefully provides some inspiration for your campaigning, recruiting and organising work in 2017 and beyond.

There are many sources of information, including the UNISON website. The women's pages can be found here: www.unison.org.uk/women In addition the women's Facebook page www.facebook.com/unisonwomen and Twitter account @womeninUNISON are used to share information about the campaigns we support, the groups we are working with and activities we are participating in. Please 'like' our page, follow us on twitter and join in with our social media campaigning.

Women's e-bulletin

We are also delighted to have launched our new women activists' e-bulletin in November 2016, with our women's conference special. The bulletins will focus on issues directly relevant to women members.

We are often approached for stories about women's lives – of their experiences of sexual harassment in the workplace, living on low pay, caring for elderly relatives, maternity discrimination etc – and this bulletin will give you the chance to have your say.

It will also include information on campaigns and events, and update you on progress on motions debated at this year's women's conference, as well as giving you and us the chance to share good practice and innovative ideas. If you did not receive the first issue, you can opt in by emailing women@unison.org.uk.

We hope this will be a valuable additional tool in our recruitment and organising challenge.

We would also encourage you to become involved in the UNISON organising space. The organising space is a secure, safe online resource developed to support our activist and organising communities. It aims to support building relationships, sharing knowledge, learning and experiences. You can join here: <https://organisingspace.unison.org.uk>

Further, information is circulated to and through regional women's networks; also to activists through the equality e-bulletin and e-focus. Articles on many of the issues raised have also appeared in the UNISON journals, on the UNISON main website and various social media.

Where motions called for lobbying they were referred to Labour Link, and to the Connect service used by UNISON where appropriate. Regional women's networks were also asked to engage in lobbying on specific issues and around events, as MPs respond to individual constituents as well as pressure groups.

UNISON is affiliated to a wide range of groups and where possible we have worked with them as well as local, regional and national community groups.

Finally, the women's campaign guide is available as a download. This guide includes information on how to organise a campaign; the priority campaigns identified as a result of motions to national women's conference; suggestions for action and information on partner organisations. This is updated annually following women's conference.

www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/08/Campaign-Handbook-2016-17.pdf



UNISON women's campaigning handbook **Your essential guide to :**

- How to organise a campaign
- Women and the cuts
- Workplace issues
- Pensions
- Welfare reform
- Women in public life
- Parents and carers
- Ending violence against women (EVAW)
- Women's health
- International campaigns

National women's committee report

In 2016, the national women's committee formed two sub-committees to concentrate on specific areas of work:

Sub-Committee 1

- Encouraging women's participation in the union
- Women in the workplace
- Women and Politics / the economy

Sub-committee 2

- Women in society
- Women's health
- Ending violence against women
- International

Joint working

The committee also recognise that many of the motions to national women's conference referred to joint working with other SOGs. Uniquely, the women's committee has representatives from all the other SOGs and the national young members' forum and we continue to work to improve those links.

Sub-committee 1

1.1 Encouraging women's participation in the union

UNISON EQUALITY SURVEY

Over 4,500 UNISON members working across the different UNISON service groups responded to our on-line equality survey during a two month period in June / July 2016. The survey was circulated through our activist networks and was also advertised via the UNISON website and through social media. Of those who replied to the gender question, 2,425 identified as women. The key results in the union activism section are as follows:

Activism

Just under a quarter were active at a branch level, far fewer at regional level (7.3%) and national level (4%).

More than half (54%) of the women respondents did not take part in any branch activities. 83% took part in no regional or national activities.

Most women skipped the question about involvement in branch and regional women's groups, and attendance at women's conference. Around 45% of the 202 women who answered did participate.

A quarter said they were more likely to get involved in UNISON than a year ago, with 65% saying they had not changed their view.

Barriers

The single largest barrier to women's participation was the pressure of work. Other major barriers were timing and venue of meetings, and family/dependant responsibilities, as well as lack of interest.

Less important were the lack of facility time, lack of confidence/knowledge and worry about the commitment. Employer attitudes were a concern to 9%.

Motion 1 : Engaging women for the future of our union

Recognised the importance of increasing membership density and the need for new strategies to increase participation – including through community activities and web-based media. Identifies the need to involve more LGBT women in women's self-organisation.

Motion 2 : Encouraging more women to be active in UNISON

Recognised the impact of austerity on women in the public sector and the consequent impact on trade union activism, particularly by low paid women.

AIM	UPDATE
To grow the union's membership, and involve more women across all equality strands.	<p>The barriers identified in the equality survey are not new, and action is being taken across the union to try and address these, where it is within UNISON's power to do so. Recent national actions include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the launch of the women's e-bulletin as a means of direct communication, initially to women activists as identified on RMS, plus women's conference attendees, but with the facility to opt in for other members. The bulletin will be used to advertise events, training and opportunities for women members, to promote campaigns and to encourage greater women's involvement;• development of a proportionality toolkit, designed to give branches information and guidance on meeting UNISON's rulebook commitment to proportionality throughout the structures;• childcare and dependant allowances have been reviewed and uprated to support those with caring responsibilities;• Learning and organising services (LAOS) are working on a branch women's officers course, to be piloted in 2017, although it is acknowledged that some regions already offer such courses to women members;

To grow the union's membership, and involve more women across all equality strands (continued).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNISON's organising space, a secure and safe online resource developed to support our activist and organising communities, aims to support building relationships, sharing knowledge, learning and experiences. <p>Additionally there have been many regional initiatives, and details can be found in the regional reports section of this annual report.</p>
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Motion 27 : Appropriate funding for women's self organisation

Raised concerns that women are being prevented from taking an active part in self-organisation.

AIM	UPDATE
To ensure that appropriate funding for women's self organisation is in place at branch and regional level.	<p>The national women's committee (NWC) acknowledge that all UNISON budgets are under close scrutiny, however concerns have been raised about the funding allocated for women's activities at branch and regional level. Information is therefore being collated and will be the subject of a report to the NEC's (national executive council's) development and organisation committee.</p> <p>In the meantime, the proportionality toolkit provides information for branches on funding of self-organisation, as outlined in the <i>Code of Good Branch Practice</i> and in the <i>Organising for Equality</i> guidelines.</p> <p>At regional level, regional networks and committees have been asked to raise awareness of potential funding streams and to encourage branches to set aside budgets for appropriate women's activities.</p>

Motion 33 : Increasing young women's attendance at women's conference

Noted the low attendance by young members at women's conference. Suggested actions to increase attendance.

AIM	UPDATE
To increase the attendance of young members at women's conference.	<p>The women's bulletin, Facebook and twitter were used to promote young women's attendance at women's conference, including a report from the 2016 delegates on their (positive) experience of women's conference.</p> <p>Two, two-day training courses aimed at young women members who want to become more active in UNISON and/or want to improve their confidence in different situations were held in February and November.</p> <p>A seminar on involving more young women members will also be held at conference 2017.</p> <p>The national women's committee also continue to seek the direct involvement of young women in their work, and have a reserved seat for a member of the young members' forum on the committee.</p>

	<p>Attendance will be monitored as part of the overall proportionality and fair representation monitoring of conference. Although there was a 50 % increase in young members attending in 2016, the actual number was very small - only 9 members. However, it is encouraging that in the UNISON equality survey almost two thirds of young members said they were more likely to get involved in the union than they were a year ago. It is important that we harness this enthusiasm, particularly at branch and regional level.</p>
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"If you're passionate about women's rights and workplace issues," say Kati and Sinéad, "and would like to gain a better insight into the work of the national women's committee, attending this conference would come highly recommended from both of us".

Kati Conway and Sinéad Liddy – NYMF representatives 2016

Motion 34 : Conference venues

Requested a review of conference venues to ensure that they are appropriate.

AIM	UPDATE
To ensure that conference venues are appropriate	Concerns about the lack of space at the 2015 women's conference in Southport were addressed, and the venue for 2018 has been changed and conference will now be held in Liverpool. The conference office continue to seek alternative venues which are affordable, accessible, and meet UNISON's requirements.

1.2 Women in the workplace

Motion 3 : Protect our employment

Raised concerns about lack of and reducing flexibility in workplaces, impacting on women's ability to organise caring arrangements. Called on the NWC to work with other departments to design a training programme covering relevant legislation, to be delivered across alternative and traditional media.

Motion 4 : Flexible working – negative impact on women’s hours and caring responsibilities

Highlighted the lack of awareness of right to request flexible working, and the mis-match between policies and practice.

Note: An amendment to this motion further referred to research on a Universal Basic Income policy – the committee supported this with the qualification that this work would not be undertaken, due to the costs involved, but they were not unsupportive of the principle. This work was therefore not prioritised.

AIM	UPDATE
To equip members to negotiate flexible working arrangements, and to achieve greater flexibility in workplaces.	<p>A resource review confirmed that the work/life balance training course already contained activities on negotiating flexible working. Work life balance is also referenced in resources on national race and sex discrimination law courses.</p> <p>There is also a national training course which can be delivered by regional education officers or regional organisers. It covers pregnancy rights, negotiating an improved parental leave policy, dependant leave and flexible working requests. A flexible working guide for members is being developed, expected in 2017.</p> <p>Additionally, a request has been submitted for further resources, potentially e-notes or lunch and do training sessions, which is under consideration by LAOS. However this is dependent on funding being available - this has recently been cut by the government and is therefore subject to greater pressure and scrutiny.</p>

Motion 14 : Young women deserve respect in the workplace

Raised concerns about the treatment of young women in the workplace – sexist and other discriminatory behaviour; the age-differential in the national minimum wage; the gender pay gap.

AIM	UPDATE
For young women to receive fair and equal treatment in the workplace.	<p>The UNISON guide on bullying and harassment has been updated and the section on sexual harassment expanded. The TUC report on sexual harassment <i>Still Just a Bit of Banter</i> was discussed at the November meeting of the NWC and will be incorporated into the committee work programme in 2017.</p> <p>Work on closing the gender pay gap is central to UNISON’s agenda, with work across all departments to negotiate, lobby and campaign for measures to close the gap for all women.</p>

Motion 15 : Maternity discrimination

Drew attention to the findings of the Equality and Human Rights Commission survey on pregnancy discrimination, and the impact of the introduction of employment tribunal fees on the ability to challenge unfair treatment.

AIM	UPDATE
To eradicate maternity discrimination	<p>UNISON is a member of the Alliance for Maternity Rights, which brings together trade unions and NGOs working in the family sector to campaign and lobby for improved maternity provisions. The Alliance has developed an action plan for the UK government, with proposals for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• improving the existing legal framework• improving employer practice• the government leading change• improving access to information for employers and women• improved health and safety provision• better access to justice• monitoring progress. <p>Work will continue on the action plan, including lobbying at national and regional level, engagement with the Labour Party and employers (through service groups).</p> <p>There is an existing national training course on negotiating maternity rights, details from UNISON's learning and organising services (LAOS) – www.unison.org.uk/get-involved/learning-development/</p>

Motion 16 : Rights of working age disabled women

Drew attention to TUC research on disability and employment (May 2015) and the high % of unemployed disabled people.

AIM	UPDATE
For disabled people to have fair and equal treatment in the workplace.	<p>The membership participation unit (MPU) in UNISON has responsibility for all equality strands, including guidance and advice on equality legislation, which is regularly updated and disseminated. Additionally LAOS training for branch equality co-ordinators covers the public sector equality duty. Training for stewards incorporates signposting further training available on disability awareness and reasonable adjustments.</p>

Motion 21 : Women and workplace dress codes

Drew attention to the inappropriate imposition of workplace dress codes which do not recognise the diversity of identity.

AIM	UPDATE
To eliminate gender-specific dress codes	The high heels and work dress petition on Facebook and subsequent parliamentary petition June 2016 were promoted through women's networks, together with TUC guidance on workplace dress codes.

1.3 Women and Politics / the economy**Motion 5 : Impact of austerity on UNISON women**

Drew attention to the impact of the government's austerity measures on women.

Motion 6 : Austerity cuts and the impact on Black women workers

Drew attention to the greater impact of austerity measures on Black women and workers, and the disparity in unemployment and low paid work.

Motion 7 : The cuts are killing us

Drew attention to the cuts to services supporting women – particularly those dealing with violence against women.

EM1 : Tampon Tax – plugging the bleed in the funding of women's services provision?

Criticised the creation of the so-called tampon tax – the diversion of VAT from the sale of sanitary products to fund women's services, rather than adequate central funding of the services.

EM2 : Adding insult to injury – the autumn budget statement

Drew attention to the impact of the autumn budget statement on women, including the cutting of NHS student bursaries, cuts to social care funding, the increase in low paid and casualised work, cuts to women's services and the introduction of funding via the tampon tax.

AIM	UPDATE
Raise awareness and tackle the impact of austerity measures on women.	The impact of the government's austerity measures is central to UNISON's work, in all departments. The UNISON <i>Public Services Champions</i> campaign was launched in September 2016, information and resources can be found here - www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/public-service-champions/

<p>Raise awareness and tackle the impact of austerity measures on women (continued).</p>	<p>Regions continue to campaign with local public sector alliances, community groups, the Labour Party, TUC, trades councils etc – detailed accounts are included in the regional section of this report.</p> <p>The UNISON political education workshop (LAOS 49) <i>Are we all in this together?</i> includes activities which look at how groups of members are disproportionately impacted by cuts and austerity, including a section on women. This has been updated for 2016 and can be used alongside the <i>Austerity</i> wall chart.</p> <p>The lack of Black women’s employment opportunities were incorporated in the UNISON response to the government’s latest gender pay gap consultation.</p> <p>The issues raised in the conference motions were included in the briefing for delegates to Labour Party women’s conference.</p> <p>In March 2016 the UK government announced its intention to scrap VAT on sanitary products.</p>
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Motion 24 : Equality, power and devolution

Drew attention to the under-representation of women in political life, and the likely worsening of this situation by future changes in the devolved nations.

Motion 25 : Women's voice in local politics

Drew attention to the particular barriers women face in becoming involved in political life.

AIM	UPDATE
To increase women's representation and influence in political decision making.	<p>The 50/50 campaigns for women's equal representation in parliaments have been promoted through women's networks and social media, with members encouraged to become ambassadors and to become involved in the campaigns.</p> <p>The national women's officer represented UNISON on a Trade Union and Labour Party Liaison Organisation (TULO) Labour Party women's representation project, which included facilitating a fringe meeting at TUC women's conference. The Labour Party has now agreed that women's conference will include formal delegations from trade unions, and will have the power to submit motions to conference – the details to be confirmed.</p> <p>UNISON Labour Link has also continued to support and work with the Fabian Women's Network, including promoting their mentoring scheme and the post-Brexit women's rights charter, launched in September 2016.</p> <p>fabianwomen.org.uk/2016/09/23/fwn-launches-fabian-womens-rights-charter</p> <p>UNISON's political education materials are in the process of updating.</p>

Women in Local Government Commission

The Fawcett Society in partnership with the Local Government Information Unit, launched a new project early in 2016 to consider the question – *Does local government work for women?* Heather Wakefield, UNISON head of local government, is a member of the Women in Local Government Commission.

Funded by the Barrow Cadbury Trust, the Commission will address concerns that the devolution agenda currently fails to give voice to women. Women remain underrepresented in leadership and decision-making roles in local government yet decisions made here impact disproportionately on women. Local government is also an important pipeline for women into parliament.

The commission will also look more broadly at the position of women in local government – with a focus on successes, as well as the overall, rather shocking picture of women’s under-representation on councils and in senior local government officer positions. The aim is to establish a framework for positive change.

An online survey by the commission, which looks at the barriers to women’s involvement in political life, was issued to UNISON women members in Autumn 2016, and the results will be used to inform work by UNISON on increasing women’s political and trade union involvement, given that these barriers are likely to also apply in the trade union environment.

Sub-committee 2

2.1 Women in society

Motion 8 : Tax credits – the best way to tackle in-work poverty

Drew attention to the cuts in support for low-paid working people and families and the impact on their living standards.

AIM	UPDATE
A fair tax system and an end to in-work poverty.	UNISON’s policy and public affairs department leads on work on tax credits and in-work poverty. Information has been shared where appropriate, and regional women’s groups encouraged to be involved with local and regional campaign groups.

Motion 10 : Now justice is only for those who can afford it

Raised awareness of the cuts to legal aid, and the increase in litigant in person cases where individuals advocate without legal representation.

Motion 11 : Legal aid and redress for women experiencing domestic abuse

Raised awareness of the cuts in legal aid, particularly in relation to domestic abuse cases, and the evidence required to achieve support.

Motion 26 : Women’s access to justice

Raised awareness of the attacks on women’s access to justice – through cuts to legal aid, employment tribunal fees and criminal court charges.

AIM	UPDATE
A justice system which is fair and equal to women.	<p>Bowing to pressure from lobbyists, including UNISON, the government dropped the unjust criminal court charge shortly after its introduction.</p> <p>The requirement for women to provide evidence of domestic abuse before being granted legal aid has also been dropped, in a judgement in a case brought by Rights of Women, a women's charity whose services aim to provide women with the legal advice and information they need to understand and use the law and their legal rights. They also work to improve the law for women and increase women's access to justice. UNISON has long standing links with the group.</p> <p>Rights of Women's comprehensive range of materials, including advice for those acting as litigant in person, and their advice line have been promoted through the women's networks and social media, and are included in the UNISON domestic abuse guide.</p> <p>UNISON has been given leave to appeal to the supreme court on employment tribunal fees.</p>

Motion 13 : The true cost of childcare for working women

Drew attention to the high cost of childcare, particularly for the parents of disabled children, and the impact on women's ability to work.

AIM	UPDATE
Affordable childcare.	<p>We continue to work with organisations campaigning for family friendly working policies, including the provision of quality childcare. We are members of the Family and Work Group co-ordinated by Working Families, and continue to support work by Gingerbread.</p> <p>The issues raised in the motion have been incorporated in the UNISON response on closing the gender pay gap, as caring responsibilities are one of the major contributory factors.</p> <p>Childcare provision was also included in the briefing to delegates to the Labour Party Women's Conference.</p>

Motion 17 : Removal of housing benefit for young women

Drew attention to the plight of young women made homeless by the government's withdrawal of housing benefit for young people between the ages of 18 and 21.

AIM	UPDATE
Restoration of housing benefit for young women.	UNISON's policy and public affairs department leads on work on housing. Information has been shared where appropriate, and regional women's groups have been encouraged to become involved with local and regional campaign groups.

Motion 23 : Creating an agenda on equality and human rights

Called on the national women's committee (NWC) to work with all UNISON bodies to ensure that gender equality is at the centre of all UNISON policies and prioritised in the union's work.

AIM	UPDATE
To protect women from discrimination in the workplace and society.	UNISON is a union of more than 1 million women members – 78% of the membership. The views of our women members and the impact of government and employer policies is therefore central to our union's work; is taken on board in all government consultations and in negotiations with employers.

Motion 32 : Pro-women, pro-choice

Drew attention to the actions of anti-choice organisations that harass and intimidate women seeking legal terminations.

AIM	UPDATE
For women to be able to exercise their right to choose in safety.	<p>UNISON continues to support the work of Abortion Rights, and is supporting the BPAS Back Off campaign, which is calling for buffer zones to be in place outside abortion clinics to prevent anti-choice protestors harassing staff and clients.</p> <p>Action by regional groups, who have been encouraged to lobby MPs, engage with local groups and support the campaign, is included within the regional action section of this report.</p>

Women and Pensions

Gloria Mills, national secretary, equalities for UNISON is leading on the women and pensions project, incorporating our engagement with the Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) campaign, together with Glyn Jenkins, head of pensions who is leading on defending and protecting pensions.

The first strand of work is on the WASPI element of the government's changes in respect of the discriminatory and unfair accelerated increases to the state pension age for women born in the 1950s.

The second strand of work will focus on defending all aspects of the state pension and ensuring inter-generational fairness. It will be inter-linked with the work that UNISON is doing to protect and secure occupational and workplace pensions.

Updates on both elements of the project will be made available through the usual UNISON communication channels, and members will be encouraged to participate where possible, including engaging with local campaigns and events.

Some regional women's networks are already actively engaging with their local WASPI campaigners – details are included in the regional reports section.



UNISON Northern region WASPI campaigners with UNISON's former president Wendy Nichols and Dave Prentis, general secretary at national delegate conference 2016

2.2 Women's health

Motion 18 : Black women and cervical cancer

Raised concerns about the low level of take-up of cancer screening and poorer awareness of the symptoms of cervical cancer amongst Black women.

AIM	UPDATE
To increase the take-up of screening/raise awareness of the symptoms of cervical cancer amongst Black women	<p>The women's health leaflet is being updated, and members will be directed to Macmillan Cancer which has information in different languages. No resources specifically directed at Black women were found.</p> <p>Regional women's networks were asked to work with local communities to encourage women to participate in screening programmes.</p> <p>UNISON's guidance on time off for screening appointments can be found here:</p> <p>www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/06/Medical-screening-leave.pdf</p>

Motion 20 : Save our newborns

Highlighted the impact of Group B Strep on newborns, called on the NWC to campaign for routine Group B Strep carriage testing.

AIM	UPDATE
To have all pregnant women routinely tested for Group B Strep carriage.	<p>UNISON has worked closely with the Group B Strep support group, including holding a successful drop-in event at Westminster to seek support from cross-party MPs for an improved screening test for pregnant women. A UNISON-endorsed briefing for all MPs was circulated in Autumn 2016 prior to the event. The work of the group has also been promoted via social media and through the women's networks.</p>



Davena Rankin, chair of the NWC, Melanie Onn MP, Sharon Greene, national women's officer and Jane Plumb, MBE, chief executive and founder of Group B Strep Support at the parliamentary launch of the "Why guess?" campaign

"I'm delighted GBSS and UNISON are working together to improve the prevention of life-threatening group B Strep infection in babies.


Their support for the parliamentary launch of our *Why Guess... when you can test?* campaign was invaluable, and helped us reach more key decision makers.


2.3 Ending violence against women

Motion 12 : It needs to stop

Highlighted the greater risk of domestic violence to disabled women and older women. Further highlighted the cuts to services used by disabled women, and the impact on their ability to flee domestic violence.

AIM	UPDATE
Effective provision to support disabled women fleeing domestic abuse.	<p>UNISON's workplace domestic abuse guidance makes specific reference to the additional impact on older women and those with disabilities.</p> <p>Work is underway to develop a course on ending violence against women, with a focus on domestic violence as a workplace issue and negotiating workplace policies, but including an overview of policy on FGM, rape, cultural violence and prostitution.</p> <p>The intention is that the course will include awareness of failure to report FGM, arising from new legislation, and safe reporting.</p>





We won't look the other way

Domestic abuse takes many forms – physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and financial and it affects victims in the workplace and beyond. That's why it's an issue for everyone including UNISON.

We are here to help and support our members.

- We provide emergency assistance, including financial aid if necessary, through our charity There For You.
- We negotiate workplace policies to support and assist staff experiencing domestic abuse.

Anyone can be a victim, regardless of gender, age, culture, ethnic origin, disability or sexual orientation and anyone can be a perpetrator – partners, spouses, parents, children or carers.

So if you need our help go to unison.org.uk/get-help or call our trained advisors on 0207 121 5620 (Monday to Friday).

You can also call UNISON on 0800 0 857 857 (text phone 0800 0 967 968). Lines are open 6am-midnight, Monday to Friday, and 9am-4pm on Saturdays or email thereforyou@unison.co.uk

Your branch may also be able to help. You can contact them directly or through UNISONdirect – details above.

UNISON – we won't look the other way

UNISON – supporting our members

We recognise the impact that domestic abuse has on our members' lives. Support and understanding from your employer can make all the difference if you are a survivor, or if you are trying to escape.

We take the lead in negotiating workplace policies to support and assist staff experiencing domestic abuse, in a confidential and safe way. If you need help, we are here for you.

UNISON – protecting jobs and services

Domestic abuse and violence against women services have been badly affected by the government's austerity measures.

We continue to campaign to protect properly funded dedicated services, and for more support to be available to victims.


UNISON – campaigning for change

Domestic abuse is not only about violence. It also takes away victims' independence and freedom to make their own decisions and prevents them from living free from harm and fear.


We have successfully lobbied for changes in the law that properly recognise the extent of abuse, which now include controlling and coercive behaviours and we are campaigning for more protection for victims.

For further information on any of these issues, including a guide to negotiating workplace policies on domestic abuse, go to unison.org.uk/women


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Motion 19 : Online safety for women

Expressed concern at the potential hazards for women using social media, both in a workplace and social context.

AIM	UPDATE
A safe on-line environment for women.	A new UNISON training course, funded by Union Learn, was piloted in the North West region. <i>Digital Champions</i> included a section on on-line safety which can also be used as a short course/e-note/lunch and do. The course will be reviewed following the pilot and made available as soon as possible.

Motion 22 : Women's rights are human rights

Criticised the recent decision by Amnesty International to work towards full decriminalisation of sex work. UNISON policy is to follow the Nordic model of criminalising the pimps and punters, and to support women to escape from prostitution.

AIM	UPDATE
An end to prostitution.	UNISON's concerns at the decision have been made clear to Amnesty International. Wherever appropriate we have continued to express support for the Nordic model, including incorporating our views in the briefing to Labour Party women's conference. Regional action to raise awareness and understanding of the issues is reported in the regional reports section.

Motion 28 : Rape Crisis in crisis

Drew attention to the cuts in funding for Rape Crisis centres, in the face of growing demand for the services. *This motion was selected as one of the women's conference motions to NDC, but was not reached.*

AIM	UPDATE
Adequate funding for Rape Crisis services.	We have continued to engage with the End Violence Against Women Coalition, and have encouraged regions and branches to become involved with and support local Rape Crisis centres. This issue was also included in the Labour Party women's conference briefing.

2.4 International

Motion 29 : Women, the refugee crisis and trafficking

Drew attention to the vulnerability of women and children refugees, forced into prostitution and forced labour.

Motion 30 : The refugee crisis

Drew attention to the impact of the Immigration Bill and the dangers faced by women and child refugees.

This motion was selected as one of the women's conference motions to national delegate conference (NDC) and was carried. It therefore becomes UNISON policy and incorporated into the NEC work programme.

Motion 31 : What's Europe ever done for us?

Drew attention to the impact that membership of the EU and consequent legislation has had on the UK in terms of equality and workplace rights.

UNISON carried out a formal consultation exercise with branches, regions and SOGs prior to the referendum, and any action taken was bound by legislation restricting lobbying. Work carried out centrally was promoted and made available through the women's networks.



REGIONAL REPORTS

Eastern

Our 2016 RWC year started well in March with a well attended and stimulating policy weekend. We took the opportunity to reflect on women's campaigning initiatives, the continuing need for self organisation for women and why feminism is an integral part of our self organisation. Following discussions it was agreed to seek to amend the RWC constitution to clearly state that the RWC is a feminist committee, campaigning from a feminist perspective. We further clarified that we believe feminism to be a range of political movements, ideologies, and social movements that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve equal political, economic, personal, and social rights for women. This includes seeking to establish equal opportunities for women in education and employment.

We also drew up our priorities for 2016, developing our work plan for the forthcoming year.

We successfully applied for funding for a one day women's conference to bring together branch women's officers, women activists and stewards, to encourage women's increased participation and attendance at national women's conference; promote self-organisation, proportionality and fair representation. We held our conference on Tuesday 1 November and provided information on UNISON campaigns of interest to women. We had conference sessions or workshops on topics such as the sex discrimination provisions within the Equality Act 2010; the WASPI campaign; the UNISON organising space.

We are pleased that the one women-only course (assertiveness) on the regional core education programme recruited well, was

successful and very well received by those women who attended.

In 2017 we will be involved in the new 'summer school' education event where courses will be facilitated on understanding domestic abuse; sex discrimination provisions within the Equality Act and a women's negotiating skills course. In addition to this we will be actively promoting the new one day course 'Calling time on women's wasted potential' which will run on International Women's Day.

Outside of UNISON activism, members of the RWC have been actively involved in supporting regional Pride events. And with Essex Feminist Collective (EFC) raising awareness on prostitution and the Nordic Model (which is UNISON policy). In addition a workshop was facilitated for EFC on women and power highlighting the absence of women in senior hierarchical positions within society and organisations and encouraging political, societal and trade union activism.

Online and face to face campaigning and lobbying has continued, with our Facebook and Twitter increasing in likes and followers.

We hope for a more active 2017.

East Midlands

This year saw the retirement of Sarah Roelofs, the region's equality officer, but Sarah's legacy lives on with her efforts to bring the equalities agenda together in the East Midlands by the formation of an equalities network which will now meet three times a year.

The equalities network will work around three issues which are important to all the self organised groups. The lunch and learn sessions organised by Sarah during the year have gone down well with members.

The AGM decided on the following issues the women's network wanted to campaign around in the next year:

1. Work life balance/flexible working. You can ask for it but it doesn't mean you get it; this affects women through the generations.
2. Misogyny and hate crime; Nottinghamshire police force has defined misogyny as hate crime "incidents against women that are motivated by an attitude of a man towards a woman and includes behaviour targeted towards a woman by men simply because they are a woman". Stop harassment of women.
3. We want to organise a celebration event for International Women's Day because we are great.

Other issues discussed:

1. Supporting the women in struggle in Derby City by organising a showing of *Made in Dagenham*
2. Menopause
3. Lack of training opportunities
4. Gender appropriate dress codes
5. Dementia awareness in the workplace
6. Increasing participation - women enjoy coming to the meetings and having a good time.

Greater London

The regional women's committee usually meets four times a year however the meeting was cancelled on 14 July 2016 due to an unusually high number of apologies. The 2016 AGM went ahead on 13 October 2016. All key committee positions were elected to and the women continue to take an active role more widely in the region, being nominated to seats on the regional council, regional committee and the various subcommittees.

The committee agreed a motion to regional council AGM in February 2016 concerning female genital mutilation. A number of committee members spoke on the motion at the AGM and not only was the motion passed unanimously but it was agreed as one of two motions to be submitted by UNISON Greater London region to national delegate conference in June 2016. The committee have agreed to undertake a survey of branches and members in the region to identify whether front line workers are receiving adequate training and support with the new mandatory duty to report cases of FGM in under-eighteens.

The second annual training and networking event took place on 9 March 2016 following the success of the pilot in 2015. This year the invitation was widened to all elected branch officers who are women. The event was held at UNISON Centre and it included workshops on recruitment and organising, setting up a branch women's SOG and developing workplace policies on issues that are important to women. There were also guest speakers on UNISON welfare and female genital mutilation. The training day was followed by an evening social held in the atrium on the ground floor. Thirty-five women attended the event and the feedback received was very positive. It is proposed that the event be run again on 10 March 2017 to coincide with International Women's Day as in previous years.

The committee have given ongoing support to women in La Concha, Nicaragua. Once again we have been asked to support the women by funding the purchase of one-hundred and fifty sheets of corrugated iron which will be handed over to twenty-five female heads of households. All of these women are experiencing deterioration in the state of the roofs of their homes and it is now the rainy season. The rains are heavy and affect the health of the families.

Our previous support has already helped twenty-two women, although there are many more that need support. The committee agreed to provide sponsorship of a further £1,000 to the project.

Northern

The women's network continues to stay busy and active throughout 2016. The devastating decision to leave Europe is already having repercussions in workplaces in the northern region with casual racism becoming prevalent just hours after the result, and migrant workers essential in supporting our local services considering leaving the UK for fear of what may happen to them. Despite women from the network being highly active in the lead up to the EU referendum all but one northern town voted to leave the EU.

The impact on the lives of women in the region of job insecurity and welfare reform continues to be part of the campaigning work of the network.

The network is grateful for the continued support and encouragement given by recently elected regional Convenor Nicky Ramanandi and Linda Hobson as Deputy Convenor who encourage women's participation and paths into leadership roles within the region and at national level.

Our policy weekend in September took as its theme 'Europe, Devolution and our Community members'. Guest speaker Gloria Mills spoke passionately of her experience working in Europe and the essential need to preserve but also invoke our European workers and human rights! We also had Jude Kirton-Darling, our MEP, who spoke about Brexit and the need for women to be involved in the negotiations and promoted her consultation around priorities we want to be considered as a part of the negotiations.

Finally we had Show Racism the Red Card speaking to us about the continued casual

and accepted racism in young people today since Brexit. We used the policy weekend as an opportunity to review our priorities and identify motions we wanted to take to NWC with 3 key regional motions identified: 'Pregnancy Discrimination', 'Brexit - the women's voice' and 'Cuts to domestic abuse services'.

The network have continued supporting wider organisations in the region including DePaul, a north east homeless charity, by collecting items which are greatly needed by homeless women in the north east including hygiene products, sanitary wear and underwear and taking part in the advent sleep out at Durham Cathedral.

As always the women's network seek to work across committees and other self organised groups in the region, participating in a SOGs liaison group which allows the sharing of good practice amongst ourselves to enable groups to be supportive of one another.

On international issues we hosted a salsa fundraising night with the international committee to raise funds for The Women's Sugarcane Cutting Committee in South West Colombia, raising £543. Our regional women's officer also took part in the Great North Run raising £390 for the Triana Womens Group in Colombia.

At the start of the year we launched our childcare manifesto which is being used in branches as childcare costs become an ever increasing barrier for women in work.

We have supported a number of campaigns throughout the year including: Save the maternity service at Darlington Memorial Hospital; Jarrow Crusade celebrations; Save South Tyneside hospital; Heart unions campaign and the Durham TA's strike and dispute to name just a few. The predominant campaign this year has been the WASPI campaign which is continuing to build strength and union wide recognition and which we continue to promote at all forums.

We have initiated a new communications strategy within the network including fortnightly email updates. This allows us to share relevant information with members and activists without sending a barrage of emails as well as an increasingly active Facebook page with some posts achieving a reach of over 1,200 people.

Women in the northern region are at the forefront of taking our campaigning out into our communities and working with sister trade unions through our Public Services Alliance via the northern TUC and our own area forums.

On training and education we have worked with Safe Newcastle to develop bespoke training to our members to become domestic violence champions, equipping reps to be able to support members who are experiencing domestic violence. This was extremely successful and is now being replicated through the northern TUC.

The challenges continue and never seem to desist however our solidarity, working well both with lay leadership and staff, has enabled us to support one another and continue to increase our reach in the northern region.

Northern Ireland

The women's committee has 45 members representing all branches in the region. In 2016, committee members again participated extensively in a wide range of organising and campaigning activity. The following is a synopsis.

National women's conference

Committee members fully participated in all UNISON national and regional seminars. The NI motion for the national women's conference 2016 called for the creation of a new agenda on equality and human rights and called on the national women's committee to work with UNISON regional women's committees to move the issue of

equality and women's rights from silo to centre stage in all aspects of UNISON policy making and implementation. The committee continues to work on all the key issues in the motion impacting on our women members including:

- the campaign against welfare and benefit cuts;
- the campaign to eliminate zero hours contracts;
- the campaign for a living wage;
- domestic violence partnerships;
- women's health;
- women in prisons;
- UNISON women's participation, and
- our positive action training programme.

The ICTU biennial women's conference took place on 3 and 4 March 2016 in Mullingar and a full UNISON delegation attended. The UNISON delegation played a prominent role at the conference and fringe events. A record number of new first time delegates and speakers participated. The conference theme was '1916 -2016 - celebrating a century of women's struggle and history'. The UNISON motion on calling on both governments to end zero hours contracts, north and south, was carried.

UNISON women members are represented on the ICTU committee by Anne Speed and Margaret McKee. Both, along with the regional secretary, have been active participants in the TU Women's Council of the Isles covering the ICTU, STUC, Wales TUC and TUC which is scheduled to meet in Belfast in November 2016. A work programme based on the motions passed at the NIC ICTU biennial conference was adopted by the committee and included themes such as:

- austerity and the impact on women;
- tackling violence against women;
- caring roles and women;
- flexible working patterns;
- equal pay;
- reproductive rights.

International Women's Day

UNISON women participated in a wide range of activities in the lead up to the IWD march in Belfast on 5 March. The theme was Pledge for Parity, focussing on pledges to take a concrete step to help achieve gender parity more quickly - whether to help women and girls achieve their ambitions, call for gender-balanced leadership, respect and value difference, develop more inclusive and flexible cultures or root out workplace bias.

Regional education programme

Committee members continued to deliver a significant element of the regional education programme with 133 women members attending our building confidence for women; pathways; women's health and history; and women here and now courses. These courses are particularly designed to encourage more women to become active. The large majority of new women stewards in the steward's induction programme again came through this route in 2015/2016. Committee members have also contributed to the increase in women stewards becoming accredited health and safety representatives.

Launch of the Inez McCormack RVH Women's Committee

In early 2016 the regional committee supported the women's committee recommendation for the establishment of local women's committees on flexible boundaries. We were pleased when a similar motion was carried at NDC. The Royal branch launched their RVH women's committee on 8 March this year to correspond with International Women's Day and named it in tribute to Inez McCormack. Membership is open to all women branch members. Its main focus is on the living wage campaign and 'abolish band 1' campaign. Other branches have been organising local events to encourage women to become involved in localised campaigning.

The impact of welfare cuts on women:

The committee have set up UNISON welfare clinics and workshops across various branches. These have attracted major support from the members.

Women in prisons

Over the past year committee members have completed 3 sessions of the Health and History course with women prisoners at Hydebank. Additional members are now being trained as lay tutors to take part in these sessions.

Domestic Violence

The committee continues to monitor and promote UNISON's domestic violence programme. Trained UNISON women stewards continue to provide domestic abuse support to staff across health trusts. The committee is monitoring the success of the project and developing a new initiative with Onus. Pamela Dooley and Roberta Magee will present our progress to a fringe meeting at NDC 2017.

Campaigns and demonstrations

Throughout the year committee members continued to play a full and active role in UNISON demonstrations. We have been actively involved in the public marches and demonstrations in support of the campaign for a living wage, the move against single to monthly pay and the May Day rally.

UN Committees

Following its involvement last year in preparing evidence to be incorporated into the UNISON submission to ICSECR, members have also been involved in the recent visits by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racism (CERD) and the recent hearing on abortion by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Assembly Elections

The committee endorsed the women's manifesto and incorporated it, along with its own policies, into the UNISON manifesto. Committee members participated in hustings both regionally and locally.

UNISON Vice President and TUC Women's Gold Badge Winner

The Committee is enormously proud that our NEC member and women's activist Margaret McKee has been elected to serve as UNISON vice president. This news was only surpassed by the news that she had won the TUC women's gold badge in September 2016. In what has been a year marked by deep tragedy for Margaret we are delighted that her commitment has been recognised in this way.



Margaret McKee, vice president is presented with the women's gold badge by Frances O'Grady, TUC general secretary

Tributes

The Committee was deeply shocked at the death of its member Lorraine Clyde. Lorraine was a member of the North Eastern education branch and a new member to the women's committee. She had spoken at the ICTU women's conference earlier in the year but was killed in a tragic road accident. She will be missed.

We also pay tribute to Barbara Mullen, UCHT - our long-standing member who recently retired and died shortly afterwards. We extended love and condolences to Margaret McKee on the murder of her son Conor and we will miss our champion Jonathan Swallow.

On a happier note, we wish our long-standing women's activist Marjorie Trimble well on her retirement and hope she will continue to support our work.

North West

Over the last year the North West regional women's committee has held committee meetings, a successful regional women's seminar and an AGM.

Negotiating, bargaining and promoting equality

The committee held a seminar on 'Women, immigration and public services'. This was an inspirational conference during which the vital role which women play in growing our union was highlighted.

We were pleased to welcome Elizabeth Anionwu, emeritus professor of nursing at the University of West London, and vice chair of the Mary Seacole Statue Appeal. Elizabeth is perhaps best known within UNISON for her extensive work on Mary Seacole, which she also spoke on, but the main focus of her talk was about her own family history, which is the subject of a book 'Mixed Blessings from a Cambridge Union – Memoirs of Professor Elizabeth N Anionwu CBE FRCN'. In particular we looked at the massive and vital contribution to our society, NHS and public services, by generations of immigrant women.

The event worked with members of the Greater Manchester Refugee Partnership, specifically REVIVE, who in their live drama told a personal account of a refugee's experience in the UK. Several women also spoke about how attending women's conference had inspired them to become active in the union.

We have worked locally and regionally on issues of immigration, specifically in Rochdale working with a family who showed extreme bravery in fleeing here from Nigeria to protect their daughter from FGM.

The family, now threatened with deportation, have been supported via a member's updates to both committee and conferences and they have worked with other organisations (RAPAR) to explore the possibility of a judicial review.

Organisation and representation

It was a focus in the committee's workplan to look at immigration; valuing all our membership and discussing appropriate support; involving young women in the union and growing activism; and support for women's refuges and refugee organisations.

Branch women's groups report their involvement at branch committee level and their ability to comment on branch business from our gender perspective. There were a number of local events through the region which marked International Women's Day in March and in Salford there was further dissemination of information on women's health and well being (eg UNISON policy on the menopause). A number of branches throughout the North West supported the collection of toiletries for homeless people, including sanitary protection products.

Branches also contributed to our International Women's Day activity which was to give donations of money and toiletries to support women fleeing violence.

Health Branches were very active in recruitment and actively engaged in the health recruitment fortnight. In branches such as Lancashire, where there is a very high female membership of almost 90%, any successful recruitment initiative automatically means the vast majority of new recruits are female. They too organised toiletry collections and supported local women's refuges in East Lancashire, and local organisations working with asylum seekers and refugees. Support is regularly given to UNISON's There for you and local food banks.

Roger McKenzie, UNISON assistant general secretary, one of the guest speakers at the

women's conference, spoke about the challenges of organising women in the fragmented workforce, in precarious work, zero hour's contracts etc. His talk covered many important issues affecting members of our union – particularly women and Black members, and the worrying rise of racism since Brexit.

Campaigning and promoting UNISON

We have actively tried to engage new members and those who don't normally attend the committee meetings. An initiative which supported this was the women's conference. Two Filipino nurse members from Lancashire were able to attend the regional women's conference. One of them is now acting as a workplace contact for other Filipino members in the trust and promoting UNISON within their community, so we now have quite high membership among the Filipino staff, and have been able to obtain representation from UNISON as a result. We have been involved in initiatives such as Reclaim the Night led by Manchester University students' union, which highlights women's safety on the streets.

Developing an efficient and effective union

Regional and branch recruitment initiatives are regularly shared and discussed, including specific campaigns to recruit those less well represented, young members, Black members and members from overseas, and to organise and recruit homecare workers and those with precarious work.

There have been several success stories from the health recruitment fortnight. In local government there continues to be campaigning re job losses and service closures, e.g. libraries and day centres, SEN and youth service provision. There has been a lot of work with teaching assistants to highlight their situation and to praise the vital contribution that they make in education. Many members are recognising that their local authorities are close to providing statutory functions only.

Monica Hirst, from the strategic organising unit at the UNISON centre, came to the North West women's committee and outlined their work on the African migrant workers' network, digital organising, and encouraged our involvement in the organising space secure site for UNISON activists.

Motions to conference were

1. Immigration and BREXIT and the growing tide of racism
2. Women and DEVO Manc
3. Women and Mental Health.

All three motions involved utilisation of the appropriate UNISON structures to highlight and campaign on these important issues.

Scotland

The Scottish women's committee have had a full workload this year and the following report highlights some of the work we have undertaken. The committee as usual has played a full role in the region and have taken up the reserve seats on the standing committees such as the health & safety and international committees. Through this activity we are able to ensure that women's concerns are heard throughout the union at a Scottish level. We also contribute to UNISON Scotland responses to Scottish government consultations.

Scottish women's committee conference and AGM

This year's conference and AGM was held on Saturday 1st October in Discovery Point, Dundee. The event was well attended. The morning session was based on a legal update that was presented by Peter O'Donnell from Thompsons solicitors and focused on recent changes around capability and fitness for work. Peter delivered a talk before taking questions from the floor. A copy of the presentation is available on request.

The afternoon session was split into two

halves. The first part was a workshop looking at what the delegates want from the Scottish women's committee and how they want us to be structured in the future. After some discussion, it was agreed that the SWC would look at a hybrid model that would retain the committee whilst having 2 open network meetings / training days a year. As well as the structure, the AGM discussed the work plan for the committee and have selected issues they want the committee to focus on in the next 24 months.

The final section of the day was the formal AGM. Elections were held for the national women's committee and debates on the following topics:

- Women and the menopause
- Pensions (this included support for WASPI and the call to reduce retirement age to 60 for both men and women).

The feedback from the day has been very positive. It was really good to see first time delegates from a range of service groups.

STUC women's conference

The 89th annual STUC women's conference was held in Perth on 28 and 29 October. The theme of conference was 'Women: many roles, many barriers' and was chaired by Davena Rankin. There were many firsts at this conference, including the first Black chair of the committee, the first time it has been held on a Saturday, to name a few changes brought in for this year. UNISON Scotland submitted motions on Women and the menopause and Pension rights (harmonisation of the retirement age to 60 for both men and women and support for the WASPI campaign).

The conference debated a wide range of motions on topics ranging from abortion rights, workers' rights, austerity, casualisation of the workforce, health concerns, the ongoing attacks on the welfare state and transport.

There were fringe meetings on Unions into Schools and the STUC *Zero campaign*, WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality) and mental health.

Guest Speakers:

Provost Elizabeth Grant, Perth and Kinross council.

Mary Jane Herbison, TUC women's committee

Susan Morris, comedian and Scottish historian

Jeanne Freeman, MSP, OBE, Minister for Social Security

Helen Connor, STUC president

Grahame Smith, STUC general secretary

Pam Currie, STUC LGBT committee

Instead of the usual hustings on the Monday afternoon there was a panel discussion looking at the theme of conference. The discussion was chaired by Davena Rankin and Diana Holland (UNITE), Vonnie Sandlan (NUS Scotland) and Talat Yaqoob (Equate Scotland) were the guests. It was a more relaxed format than previous years and the guests each spoke for 5 minutes on their career journeys and the challenges they had faced in progressing through their respective career choices, which were all very different. They also spoke about what changes they have made to make things easier for the next generation of women following in their footsteps. Questions were taken from the floor. The discussion addressed some serious challenges that women still face today in both society and the workplace.

Workplan 2015 / 2016

After discussion it was agreed that the SWC would move to a 2-year work plan to allow topics to be tackled in depth. This means we continued the work of the previous year under the following headings.

Group A: Inspiring women through education and activism

Group B: Violence against women

Group C: Workplace issues

Full details of the work undertaken by each of the groups can be found in the SWC annual report which can be emailed out on request.

South East

Women's conference 2016:- National women's conference was very well attended and the number of delegates from the South East region continued to improve on the previous year's figures with 43 delegates having attended. This is good but we can still improve on these figures for 2017 as every branch in the region can send at least one delegate and there are over 100 branches in the South East. Feedback from delegates and visitors from the region was very positive. All 3 South East motions were carried.

Women's training and education:- Following on from women's conference which had a strong theme of education and training. The women's committee are very pleased to have produced a programme of education and training for women members and activists in the region which is becoming much more widely recognised with increasing numbers of women making their way through the programme. Another potentially positive aspect is that the number of branch women's officers in the region has risen during 2016. In January 2016 the number of branch women's officers was 38 - by October 2016 that number had increased to 45 which is good news and the women's committee believe that the Passport and the training that it offers to women is playing a significant role with regards to increasing the participation of women and encouraging more women members to put themselves forward for branch women's officer positions.

The courses that ran during 2016 for women members and women activists were:

Women leaders

Branch women's officers

Women's history part 1 & 2

Pregnancy and maternity rights
Assertiveness skills
Sex discrimination
Domestic violence workplace policies



Members at the SE region branch women's officers course 2016

There is also an equal pay one day briefing but unfortunately this was cancelled due to low take up but next year we are confident it will run as a lot of women members are keen to complete the Passport training programme and only have this module to complete.

Assertiveness skills and the domestic violence workplace policies courses ran twice across two different offices to allow more women across the region to attend. The women's committee are also looking at alternative ways of delivering the courses on the passport as some women have reported difficulty in being able to attend weekend courses and therefore next year the women's history course part 1 will run for 1 day a week over a three week period. Based on the uptake for this course the women's committee might look to deliver more courses from the programme in this way.

There is also a new Learning Bursary for Low-paid Women. Phil Wood, the outgoing regional secretary donated £35,000 for a bursary/grant for low-paid women who would like to take up the opportunity of education and training but find the costs prohibitive. The regional low-paid women's learning grant

is also now becoming more widely known about and the first applications have started to come in.

The women's committee are strong advocates of providing excellent training and learning opportunities for women members and are also keen on taking up those opportunities – two members will begin their MA in Global Labour and Social Change in January 2017.

Regional equality conference:- The regional women's committee chair, Julia O'Connell, contributed as part of a panel of lay member hosts at a very well attended and successful regional equality conference which took place in April at UNISON Centre. Guest speakers included Kate Green MP, Roger Ellis (Thompsons), Alice Hood (TUC Head of Equality and Strategy) and Maggi Ferncombe (South East Regional Secretary). The topics for discussion included race discrimination, the EU referendum, the recruitment and organisation of young members in the trade union movement and equality in UNISON with a particular focus on self organisation and proportionality. Feedback from the working groups included recommendations on proportionality e.g., branches having to report on their progress on working towards achieving proportionality as part of the joint branch assessment process.

Regional women's committee:- Every meeting throughout 2016 has almost achieved full attendance. The members of the committee have been working very hard throughout the last couple of years at improving proportionality across the South East regional structures by increasing the number of women members involved in the democracy of their union. The members of the committee have increased their visibility at regional level and have been playing active roles on regional committee and regional service group structures and a number of them have been nominated and elected as chairs of various regional and service group committees.

More recently, the women's committee members have focused their attentions on increasing the participation of other women members on regional committee and service group committee structures, and to attend regional council and regional policy weekend. Throughout the year, some members of the committee have also been involved in various campaigning activities in their branches and also in national campaigns on housing, social workers, equal pay day, end violence against women.

Women's history month:- Women's history month was well utilised for recruitment and organising events themed around women's equality issues with 25 branches holding events during the month with all branches using the regional women's history recruitment pack, resources and 'UNISON women' freebies.

Women's forum:- Women members and women activists from across the South East region met in Eastbourne at the beginning of October for the annual women's forum and had a great weekend, listening to guest speakers, attending workshops and formulating ideas and writing motions for 2017 national women's conference. As we are all aware, self organisation is an excellent way of increasing the participation of women members and of the 52 attendees at this year's forum, 34% were attending for the first time.

The women's forum also coincided with the start of Black History Month and to celebrate this, the forum kicked off with the film about the Grunwick dispute of 1976. The summer of 1976 might be well remembered as the 'heatwave' summer, but for the workers of Grunwick it was the start of a two year dispute involving trade union recognition and working conditions inside the film processing factory that was impacting mostly on Asian women workers.

The guest speakers included Professor Elizabeth Anionwu who was one of the main campaigners for the Mary Seacole statue which now stands proudly in the grounds of St. Thomas's Hospital. The forum also welcomed guest speaker Anneliese Dodds Labour MEP South and Megan Dobney, regional secretary of the South East Region TUC.

The four workshops were:

1. *Attacks on our terms and conditions: the impact on women and how we can challenge it* - discussed women's experiences of the impact of austerity on workplace policies, restructures and outsourcing and strategies for campaigning at local level.
2. *Women doing it for themselves* – focused on how women have played a key role in pushing forward issues and developing legislation, such as the Equal Pay Act and Sex Discrimination and considered how women can continue to be agents of change in a hostile environment.
3. *Proud to be in UNISON* – looked at the regional campaigns and how we can use our own stories and experiences to inspire and encourage new women members into the union.
4. *Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools* – considered the government's Women and Equalities Committee recent report exposing the shocking scale of sexual harassment and violence in UK schools.

On the last day of the forum, ideas for motions for women's conference were discussed and informal motions written. Six motions were submitted to standing order committee.

As in previous years, women members gave generously by donating sanitary products for Southampton refuge, and donating financially via the Saturday night quiz players' fee to Eastbourne refuge.

Annual general meeting: – the AGM welcomed guest speaker Bernadette Serrano from UNISON Plus who spoke about the new 'women's cancer cover' which the women's committee believe was great but not necessarily of benefit to low paid women who would probably struggle to afford this union benefit.

The business of the AGM ran very smoothly and thanks were given to Julia O'Connell who has been chair of the committee for the past two years and who was elected to national women's committee and will take up that role following women's conference in February. The AGM welcomed the new chair, Cathy Roblin from Southampton District branch and also two new vice-chairs, Tania McGee and Emma Kettle, all of whom will do a great job leading the women's committee over the next couple of years.

South West

The committee and campaign priorities

Following a successful regional conference 2015 we have enjoyed a nearly full committee throughout the year.

In November the new committee identified its work priorities and Emilia Davies was nominated as joint co-ordinator with Kym Bayley. The issues we thought the most important for women in the region included the Trade Union Bill which we raised via women's news and also the women's email network. Also:

- Sanitary protection, the tampon tax and food banks – a political issue! – This was raised as a Christmas campaign 'But Christmas is just one period' and we asked all women to continue to donate to food

banks or refuges. A women's refuge trust in Cornwall was approached who welcomed receipt of any donated products and women were also asked to support suitable women's organisations in their area.

- International Women's Day – materials including new sashes were provided for members to organise events in branches and many took place throughout the region including Dorset, Cornwall, Plymouth, UWE.
- Communication – improving communication is always a priority. We now have a Facebook page, produced women's news in January and contributed to SOG news in March. Unfortunately it hasn't been possible to produce either since and we are considering moving to electronic news only.
- Committee training - In March the committee had some training with an external trainer and trade unionist. The session increased our knowledge of each other's skills and enabled us to consider working together with a more effective, political and strategic approach.
- Domestic abuse - we won't look the other way – Over 70 members (including 6 men) were trained in 2015 through a programme of training courses and workshops. Members were encouraged to go back to their branches and consider negotiating a model workplace policy with employers using UNISON's guidance document Domestic Violence and Abuse: a trade union issue. We are now considering the best way to progress this work further as well as continuing the training as part of the next regional education programme.

Women's and Equalities Select Committee and the gender pay gap

Members throughout the region, including committee members, took part in a focus group in Bournemouth on 7 January. We met with MPs from all parties on the Parliamentary Women's and Equalities Select Committee chaired by Maria Miller MP. The evidence given contributed to the committee's report on discrimination and the gender pay gap.

National women's conference

Over 60 delegates travelled from the south west to Brighton, the largest delegation ever. Sophie Jenkins and Amanda Brown were regional delegates and did a great job creating a sense of regional identity and supporting first time delegates. Delegates were also supported writing and delivering speeches – in fact a total of 14 delegates spoke with several speaking between 2 and 6 times!

Regional council motion

In January the committee took a motion to regional council addressing concerns raised by members that some branches are not funding self-organisation and attendance at national SOG conferences in particular. This is also being considered by the regional equality scheme. The committee welcomes approaches from branches seeking advice on developing self-organisation.

Supporting and working with other SOGs

The committee recognises the importance of campaigning with other SOGs wherever possible. We took the opportunity to meet with disabled members to discuss a regional response to a national consultation and worked alongside Black and LGBT members on the SOG stall at Tolpuddle.

Health and safety and menopause

The committee was delighted to be invited to deliver two workshops on menopause at the regional health and safety forum in July. This was a great opportunity to raise a very

important issue for women in a mixed group. Both workshops were well received.

Education and training

The committee continues to ensure that the regional education programme included women only training. Assertiveness training is always popular and over-subscribed. Unfortunately a new course on sex discrimination had to be cancelled due to the very low number registered. It is listed again in the programme for 2017. Five new branch women's officers were trained in May.



Hayley Kemp, speaking at conference

Regional Women's Conference 2016 and AGM – 'The Power of Women together'

Croyde Bay, September 30 – October 2

As this year's conference was a full weekend it was possible to cover all the committee's priorities. It was a really packed agenda but thankfully with some time for relaxation and for networking too.

Clare Moody MEP addressed the thorny issue of women's rights in Brexit while our own Hayley Kemp talked of her experience working with refugees in Calais and the Middle East. Members were also inspired to take action following speakers on FGM (Forward Bristol) and Stop Porn Culture. As usual we are pleased that many of the workshops were facilitated by members.

Responding to feedback from previous conferences the first session covered topics relating to how UNISON works - 'Lost in UNISON'; recruiting women; the role of the steward or case worker; getting young women involved and women only education. Other workshops included – 'Calling time on women's wasted potential' based on a fantastic and inspirational book; Workplace, what workplace (how to be an activist in outsourced workplaces); domestic abuse ; mental health – support not stigma ; the power to be you and a workshop on getting involved – your voice in parliament delivered by our regional parliamentary outreach worker. The SOG panel was also a highlight for members.

The weekend also included a feminist quiz one evening, members learned shim sham dancing and taster sessions of reiki , reflexology and mindfulness. There was also aquarobics and a range of crafts (making feminist bunting and suffragette rosettes) all delivered by members using their own skills and experience. It really was fantastic to see the great tradition of women's craftivism in action with women being involved in productive activity whilst discussing difficult issues and planning campaigns. A banner called 'Women reaching out' was also produced during the weekend displaying every member's fabric version of their hand. Women also donated a huge number of toiletries which were given to local women's organisations and taken to the jungle in Calais.

This was our best attended conference to date and all feedback has been extremely positive. 27 women said they had never attended a UNISON event before and 31 said they were going to get more involved as a result.

Finally

This report details the work undertaken by members of the regional committee but we also want to recognise the fantastic activism

that women are involved in up and down the region. Well done to everyone who has represented members, negotiated with employers, organised branches, been a workplace rep, supported members, recruited, campaigned and also taken industrial action. Several new women's groups have also started up this year. This is a tremendous achievement especially as it has been another incredibly tough year due to yet more cuts and austerity measures, and for many women union activity is in addition to juggling so many other priorities at home and work.

So we'd like to thank members of the committee who stepped down at the AGM, Sarah, Sophie, Alison and Harriet. We also send a massive thank you to all the women members in the region for the dedication, perspiration and inspiration that you have given to your branch and fellow members during this past year. We are extremely privileged to have represented such a fantastic region! And if you'd like to get more involved then new members are always welcome to join the committee, or feel free to pop along and observe any one of our meetings.

Cymru/Wales

National women's conference

There was a good turn out from the Cymru Wales delegation at national women's conference in 2016, representing 23 branches.

As the 'heart unions' campaign fell during national women's conference, the Welsh delegation had t-shirts made to show their support for the campaign and had photos taken whilst at Brighton to post on social media and use in their newsletter.

Jane Gebbie, regional chair of Cymru Wales women's group and national women's committee member, helped to organise a collection of women's and girl's underwear in aid of the 'Smalls for All' campaign – the collection was a huge success.

The motion submitted by Cymru Wales regarding online safety was passed at conference, and our delegates actively took part in all of the motion debates and amendments.

Online safety

To complement the motion regarding online safety submitted to national women's conference, the women's group organised a training session on online safety and responsibility at their development weekend. The session was so successful it has now been taken up by the national women's committee.

In order to further this important work, the group have worked with the digital skills Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF) project to deliver a 'Combating cyber violence' workshop on 25 November – International day for the elimination of violence against women. The event will further be complemented by an evening of inspiring guest speakers.

Development weekend

The women's development weekend in March was a great success. The weekend concentrated on women's safety and included guest speakers from the Welsh government on human trafficking, a training session on online safety and a self-defence session.

Human trafficking

Following the development weekend, the women's group submitted a motion to the Cymru Wales regional council to raise awareness of human trafficking and encourage branches to work with employers to undertake staff training to recognise human trafficking signs. A pack of resources

was provided for branches to utilise regarding this issue.

The committee produced a flyer on the Nordic model (in relation to prostitution) for information to be used when lobbying MPs for the sex buyer law. They have also produced a toolkit for branches to deliver awareness training so that public service employees are aware of the signs of human trafficking and their responsibilities if they suspect that this illegal activity is being undertaken.

Fair funding for Wales

The committee have been involved in supporting the campaign for fair funding for Wales, lobbying local MPs/AMs, and were at the Senydd when the petition was delivered ensuring that women's voices were very clearly heard.

Action against elder abuse

The women's group have been raising awareness of elder abuse in Wales. It has been recognised as an issue for women in particular as whilst there are refuge centres for women, they are aimed primarily at younger women who may have children; there is no specific provision for elderly women.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day was held on 15 June. To mark the date, members of the women's committee attended the equalities forum to give a presentation on elder abuse – recognising the signs, delivering shocking statistics and showing how branches can make a difference. The committee asked members of the women's group, those in the equalities forum and branches to sign a pledge against elder abuse, and resources supporting the campaign were circulated.

Women's engagement

The women's group have been pleased to support and promote 2 women's lives courses covering the north and south of Wales, and are keen to meet the participants to promote engagement in the work of the women's group.

In addition, following the success of the nationally run course 'confidence skills for young women' the group are pleased to hear that this course will also run in the region. The group hope to work with the young members' forum and other interested parties to promote inclusion.

Refugee crisis

The women's group were invited to the recent regional policy weekend to provide a fringe event regarding their work around women refugees, which was run in conjunction with Oxfam Cymru.

The crisis affects women and children in a number of ways from sexual exploitation, violence against women and girls to the lack of empowerment for these women to stand up against a predominantly male backdrop. Safety is a huge issue for women in tented communities.

A collection was held during the event, raising a total of £161.61, which was donated to Oxfam Cymru to continue their work. In addition, UNISON Cymru Wales pledged to seek donations from each branch across Wales to support their local refugee organisations, raise awareness of the refugee crisis amongst our members – dispelling myths and confusion - and help refugees locally by welcoming them and building relations amongst their communities.

Women's toolkit

The women's group have been raising awareness of various campaigns, including the EHRC's 'Power to the bump' campaign relating to pregnancy and maternity discrimination (which resulted in the inclusion

of an article in the local press), women's health (including endometriosis), Rape Crisis in crisis (encouraging branches to support their local groups), supporting refugee women and 'women's rights are human rights' (a campaign to end prostitution).

The group are in the process of compiling resources to support these campaigns and raise awareness in the workplace, incorporating the information into a women's toolkit that can be shared across the region.

Refuges/food banks

Cymru Wales continue to support local refuges and food banks by collecting toiletries and food stuffs on a continual basis to distribute across the region.

Press

The women's group have been highlighting their work across the region, providing regular social media updates and also a number of press releases relating to human trafficking and the refugee crisis. The group were also pleased to have an article published in a Wales paper (the Western Mail) regarding pregnancy discrimination which was well received. Their work has also been included in UNISON In-Focus.

AGM 2016

Election to the regional women's committee is done on a bi-annual basis – 2016 is an election year. With this in mind, the women's group look forward to welcoming new members to the committee going forward.

West Midlands

The regional women's committee have hosted two events this year. In March we celebrated International Women's Day. We discussed fairtrade and showed the film Suffragette. Delegates enjoyed fairtrade cereal bars and juices.

In November the committee hosted Regional Women's Day. We discussed sexual harassment and what branches might do to raise the issue in workplaces. We were very pleased to be joined by Bernadette Hyland. Bernadette, is a writer and historian from the North West and shared with us the life of Mary Quaile, one of the most famous women trade unionists of her time. As a result of the day the committee is considering setting up a women's history group. The delegates enjoyed the film *Pride* in the afternoon.

The committee have met three times this year to plan events and ensure women's issues are at the heart of all the region do. The region wishes to record its thanks to our national women's committee reps.

Yorkshire and Humberside

The regional women's group have had a fantastic 2016, and have worked collectively towards another successful year. As in previous years, valuable contributions have been made to both the regional equalities plan and regional women's group work plan by many members.

The objectives for 2016 were to encourage branches to set up SOGs and send members to regional SOGs; develop and provide information for branches on issues affecting women; offer training for women members in the region; influence policy making on women's issues; map women's equality activity, and promote the inclusion of women members within UNISON.

The regional committee undertook various actions during the year in order to fulfil their objectives including:

- Supporting women across the region to run successful events and stalls in their workplaces in celebration of International Women's Day, providing resources such as UNISON International Women's Day ribbons and women's health packs for stalls.
- Holding a regional weekend event to coincide with International Women's Day, attended by over 30 women. Speakers at the event included UNISON president Wendy Nichols, councillor Judith Blake – the first woman to lead Leeds Council and Linda McAvan MEP for Yorkshire and Humberside. In addition women took part in workshops and all of those who attended signed a personal 'pledge for parity'.
- Running a well received women's officer training day for new and potential women's officers.
- Continuing links with 'Life for African Mothers and Babies' – donating clothing to the charity.

As in previous years, members of the women's group attended and supported the return to learn and women's lives awards ceremony in Leeds. The event celebrated the brilliant achievements of our women members this year.

Delegates from the women's group have been elected to represent Yorkshire & Humberside women on the relevant committees including regional council, regional committee, TUC, and regional service groups. Many of those who put themselves forward for election had had support and encouragement from the women's SOG.

The women's group has collectively written and submitted two motions on topics they felt strongly about, and have relevance to women in the workplace and the wider community.

The women's group AGM is due to take place on 10th December at Commerce House, Leeds.

Finally, thank you to the members – both existing and new - for their continued dedication and hard work on behalf of the regional women's group and UNISON's equality agenda.

CONFERENCE REPORTS

National delegate conference

21/24 June 2016, Brighton

Delegates Jo Cardwell, Lisa Dempster

I was very proud to be one of the women's delegates to NDC this year, alongside Lisa Dempster. Both of us made a number of contributions on behalf of UNISON women. The background of Tory austerity and the anti-migrant and refugee racism that was present during women's conference in February meant that our conference prioritised motions on the closure of Rape Crisis centres and the refugee crisis. Unfortunately, we ran out of time to debate Rape Crisis, but I hope Lisa will mention the great speeches she made on other topics.

I spoke on the refugee crisis, that has seen a wonderful response from so many trade unionists across the country. The aid convoy to Calais, disgracefully held back by the French authorities, was sponsored by UNISON and praised in Dave Prentis' speech. Our motion further developed that debate in conference and called on the union and labour movement to continue to deliver aid to refugees. In the current context, it is not just aid, but an act of solidarity and a way of opposing Tory and UKIP racism.

Around 55% of refugees are women and children seeking to reunite with husbands, sons and fathers that have gone ahead. The war ships in the Mediterranean and the abysmal response from Europe's leaders is forcing many into the hands of people traffickers. Women, their children and unaccompanied children are at huge risk of being trafficked for sex.

Whilst Nigel Farage says that sexual assault will increase with rising immigration, we are very clear that sexism is not a foreign import and we affirmed our opposition to women's rights being used as a way of whipping up

racism. We are opposed to all forms of sexism and racism.

Our motions saw many women speaking. We encouraged women activists from across the country to speak. With almost 80 per cent of the union's members being women, we wanted to increase our representation in the speeches. Whilst it was important to show the impact of oppression on women in today's society, we also wanted to represent working class women at the forefront of the struggle to defend their rights and the rights of others. Ours is not a passive history.

We had many women who said they wished



to come to women's conference following our contributions; we hope that we can build on that next year with

more women at our conference, but also more women at NDC. I'd also like to thank Sharon Greene and the national women's committee and the women who attended our caucus with ideas for our conference. Hopefully see you all next year.

Jo Cardwell

This was the first time I have attended conference as a delegate for a SOG group after myself and Jo Cardwell from Islington were voted for at women's conference. It was quite nerve wracking as we were there to represent our women members and we wanted to do them proud but also because we were there to move motions, again the first time for me.

Jo spoke passionately and brilliantly on the refugee crisis. I was to move motion 49 Rape Crisis in Crisis but sadly despite our best efforts to get it to the top of the priority list we ran out of time and conference ended on the motion before this.

I did manage to speak in support of some motions including motion 100 Defending our human rights and equality protection, supporting our LGBT members and bringing a little bit of light relief on Thursday afternoon, motion 65 Austerity – How much worse will it get for Black members? On Friday morning I spoke on the effects of bullying in support of the young members' motion.

On Friday afternoon I moved the amendment



to motion 31 – Public service workers under pressure, at this point, after a good (but long!) week of debates I was too tired to be nervous about moving my first item and was quickly on and off the podium before I knew it!

Jo and I also attended the women's caucus meeting where we tried to encourage the members to get up and have a go if they felt they wanted to speak on a motion and we told them we were there to support them in this if they needed advice about writing a speech or about speaking. Throughout the week a few women told us that both Jo and I had inspired them to get up and speak or that they didn't feel ready to speak at this conference but would try in the future.

I had an amazing time representing our women members. I felt very privileged to spend time with Jo and get to know her better and to hear her speak - she is very passionate in what she believes and she draws other people into this as well. I had a lot of members, both women and men, also thank me for my speeches and said that I had inspired them, made them laugh/cry and that I spoke well and that for me made me feel that Jo and I did represent women's conference very well and we both enjoyed every minute of it. Thank you for giving us this opportunity.

Lisa Dempster

Self organised group conferences

Black members

22-24 January 2016, Llandudno

Delegate : Jenny Forbes

Dave Prentis our newly elected general secretary was in attendance and delivered a warm and welcoming speech. He focused on the sensitive issues surrounding race discrimination and the impact it has on Black members and gave conference assurances that UNISON would campaign against these issues.

The guest speakers over the following days included Matilda MacAttram, founder and director of Black Mental Health UK which is in its 10th year as an organisation. She delivered a moving speech about the struggles and often distressing experiences Black people face with mental health. She also highlighted although a taboo subject Black people were often seen in a negative light. The Labour back bencher Chuka Umunna MP was also in attendance and focussed on matters in relation to Black and ethnic minorities' lack of presence within the political party, however conference was certainly surprised when delegates realised Q&A's were not going ahead. There were a number of fringe meetings including Islamophobia, and becoming an MP/councillor taster training session.

The women's caucus was dominated by a Q&A's for Margaret Greer who received the Mandela Award which was presented to her by Dave Prentis on Friday afternoon. She shared her experience as a Black activist focusing on her journey within the trade union movement and her current position as chair of the national Black members' committee. This was warmly welcomed. The national women's conference 2018 was also raised briefly as there was a common sense of disapproval that Black women could be disenfranchised because of the 10 days between national Black members' conference and national women's conference.

Davena Rankin appropriately stepped in and reminded delegates about the history of the conference, as in the past national Black members' conference had moved from November to January and this caused a number of issues with the arrangement of conference timings. She highlighted that the national women's conference had always been held in February.

On Saturday morning I moved the motion on behalf of national women's committee on Black women in low paid occupations. It was well received and generated a little debate as there were a further two speakers to the motion.

Junior vice president Carol Sewell and president Wendy Nichols were in attendance. Conference closed with a sing along which delegates thoroughly enjoyed.

Disabled members

29-31 October 2016, Brighton

Delegates : Shaaron Coward, Elaine Shelton

Day 1

No formal conference business but various caucus meetings, regional meetings and workshops. The women's caucus was fairly well attended and a discussion took place around the motions submitted by the women's network. After some gentle persuasion and promise of support a number of delegates did come forward and it was good to see a few new delegates offering as well.

Access to Work and reasonable adjustments workshop

The workshop was informative and we were reminded that anyone with a disability has a right to reasonable adjustments which the employer has a duty to provide. The key word here is reasonable, and cost can be considered as a factor of reasonableness, however it is worthy to note that public service employers are not allowed to say they can't afford the reasonable adjustments.

A recent UNISON equality survey was shared which demonstrated that the main issue was not obtaining agreement on reasonable adjustments but on actually having them implemented, which often takes an unreasonable amount of time. This is the area where employers seem to drag their feet and an area to make our stewards aware of.

Access to Work

We were advised that Access to Work is often considered DWP's best kept secret, despite them never actually spending all their budget, or them actually having any ruling that funding would stop if they did use their budget, raising awareness to our stewards of the potential of the grant system, or even advice system is crucial. Advice was given on how to maximise the chance of success; the grants process; capping of grants and the online application system.

This government has made a commitment to halve the disability employment gap by the end of this parliament. That is a huge target, but it is difficult to see how Access to Work would have the capacity to deal with such an increase in workload to allow this to happen.

Day 2

The annual report was moved and we were reminded that despite the many significant political changes and challenges this year the national disabled members' committee has still carried out a significant amount of work. In particular it has been recognised that disabled members should have 2 elected positions on the NEC, and that elections will take place for these positions next year. We were reminded that careful consideration should be given to who is elected into these roles as they will be very important.

The longest motion of conference sought to bring NDMC standing orders in line with national standing orders rules. However, the motion was lost after some inconsistency and a lack of consultation with regional SOGs was pointed out by delegates. A 2/3 majority was required as it constituted a rule change.

Motion 4 Trade Union Act and disabled women activists – reminded us that despite significant improvements to this draconian Act, it continues through the parliamentary process and there is still a potential significant threat to facility time. The motion was passed to continue to campaign for dedicated facility time, provide good practice guides for branches, conduct a survey to establish if disabled women activists are getting facility time, and to promote activism within disabled and women member's networks.

A number of motions addressed the issues around employers not accepting disability leave policies, which results in disabled members being disadvantaged and more likely to be sacked in the management of sickness/ capability procedures. With calls to identify good practice in employers, and share these amongst regions and branches so we can strive to achieve consistency, whilst avoiding a race to the bottom. Additionally, issues around reasonable adjustments were also addressed.

It was again identified that concerns remain that not all regions and branches fully support the SOG's, with many branches not having their own SOG's, or not supporting members to attend regional SOG's despite an acknowledgement of how important the organisations are for promoting equality. SOG participation at all levels needs to be both promoted and supported.

Carol Sewell – Vice president addressed conference, speaking of the rule change, Brexit and employment tribunal fees.

Motion 10 - Young workers and mental health – was particularly interesting as it called for NDMC to investigate the concept of mental health first aiders in the workplace, which works on the same lines as first aiders at work.

Motion 13 - I'll only be a minute – created a bit of a stir as it requested a brown badge

scheme be investigated for effectiveness, the idea being that people who have mobility problems, such as older people, but who do not meet the full criteria of a blue badge, are offered a brown badge which gives them some priority parking. The theory is this would leave disabled spaces for blue badge holders. There were speakers both for and against this motion, but ultimately it was passed.

Composite A – Driver only operated trains – called for a campaign to be raised against the introduction of these as it leaves people who need assistance in a difficult position.

Day 3

Disabled members' conference would not be the same without a discussion around how we are identified. This year it was around invisible disability vs non-apparent disability, with some people feeling concerned at being described as invisible. Perhaps a motion to conference next year could be to investigate descriptive language used, to try to identify language which people do not find offensive.

A couple of motions on day 3 led to concerns being identified around the impact of the reduction in funding for Disability Colleges, and the academisation of schools, pointing out that training and education is often difficult for disabled people to access anyway. The motions call on UNISON to lobby the government to fully fund training to promote the increase of employability for disabled people.

Motion 24 - Taking our rights forward – called on the NDMC to ensure trade unions and disabled people are included in the Brexit negotiations and to support a campaign to ensure legislation, that is currently used to support our rights, is maintained post exit.

Gavin Callaghan – policy officer at the *Papworth Trust* reported on a survey they undertook prior to the EU vote.

It was surprising to hear that they found that 80% of disabled people they surveyed said that they would vote to leave, despite this threatening a number of projects and schemes such as the Blue Badge scheme, many travel schemes, employment rights etc. Plus, we were advised that up to 20% of all grants from the EU were used to benefit disabled people.

They then ran an information awareness campaign and the final results were a 79% turnout of disabled people with a 54% leave vote. Much improved, so the campaign helped, but still more people voted to leave than to stay, though many reported their main reason was the money promised to the NHS which has now been rescinded.

Motion 27 - Impact of menopause on disabled women – was a welcome motion pointing out the impact is much worse for disabled women. It requested NDMC raise awareness, gather evidence and consider research into the effects of the menopause on disabled women, and develop a campaign to break down barriers, to enable and empower disabled women going through the menopause to be taken seriously.

Motion 29 was the last of conference as expected leaving a number not reached.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) members **18-20 November 2016, Llandundno** **Delegates: Norma Black, Debbie Hollingsworth**

The overall theme throughout conference was that of eradicating all forms of exclusionary behaviour with the message 'Yn gryfach gyda'n gilydd yn UNSAIN' – we are 'stronger together in UNISON,' and 'when we march together, we're unstoppable'.

The debates began with challenges to standing orders committee with reference back on the NLGBT amendment to motion 27

which was not admitted to the agenda and had been ruled out of order as it contained a derogatory term.

NLGBT were concerned that they were not even allowed to say the words and were seeking reference back to allow the amendment.

In subsequent verbal reports SOC stood their ground, and the debate concluded with NLGBT committee committing to continue to challenge and seek further guidance on what is acceptable when 'naming the names'.

The Scottish Region also sought reference back in relation to their motion – 'Prevent' agenda in Scotland. SOC advised that UNISON is currently taking advice where our members do not support the Prevent agenda and have produced guidance for members. The Scottish region pledged to continue with their efforts to have the debate.



Debates were challenging but healthy and always respectful. Here are just a few:-

Motion 5 - Zero tolerance of bi-phobia, as a form of exclusionary

behaviour with a call to regions to support bi awareness and to consider flying the pink, blue and purple flag; and calling for work to encourage greater involvement of bisexual members within the union.

Motion 14 – Inappropriate language, which challenged the use of the word 'queer'. Speaker after speaker argued that banning the word could be seen as policing identities. Overwhelmingly conference voted against this motion with so many speakers against acknowledging that in certain contexts the use of the word could be considered a hate crime, and what is needed is to challenge the misuse of the word.

Motion 16 – #Ask my pronoun, discussion around the impact of misgendering based on gender assumptions. Speakers raised awareness that using the correct pronoun increases inclusivity for everyone and on the impact of being called he or she by mistake really does hurt.

Motion 28 - Trans prisoner, focused on the tragic deaths in custody of two trans women, Vikki Thompson and Joanne Latham, who committed suicide whilst being held in male prisons. Conference was urged to keep up the pressure and to work together to develop good practice guidance for transgender prisoners for staff.

Motions 36 - Decriminalisation for safety and motion 37 Protecting the human rights of sex workers, was composited as composite F. NWC representatives were mandated to oppose both and our delegate did a fantastic job, supported by the South East region and together they vociferously reminded conference that prostitution is a form of gender based violence and that sex work is a form of violence against women.

The NWC will actively oppose any proposal to change current UNISON policy and conference was reminded of national delegate conference policy that prostitutes should not be criminalised but those who buy sex and those who profit from others should be charged. Our delegate further argued for criminalising for safety citing the many lives that have been changed as a result of having to wear a seat belt.

Motion 31 - homelessness in the LGBT community, heard how the growing plight of people who find themselves homeless are targets for violence and sexual exploitation, with a serious negative impact on their medical and mental health. Our NWC delegate highlighted the effects on LGBT older people being forced into shared accommodation, and that coming out as LGBT

could be dangerous in a shared accommodation situation.

Workshops

Our delegates attended one of two workshops on – *Are there occasions when gender does matter?* One for members who identify as women and the other open to everyone. There was a short presentation on a US survey that found that attitudes are changing among young people with many concluding that gender is a spectrum. The presentation talked about unpacking the language of who we are and suggested a sliding scale of gender where we all exist on that spectrum. The workshop debated issues around when gender should and shouldn't matter and what needs to change. There was also a discussion around members standing for election with different gender identities for different meetings.

We really enjoyed representing the national women's committee, it was bendigedig!

Service group conferences

Community

26-28 February 2016, Southport

Delegate : Debbie Hollingsworth

Conference got off to a good start on the Friday with a speech from Roger McKenzie, Assistant General Secretary, who assured delegates that the sector was highly valued by UNISON. However there was acknowledgment at all levels that despite being the fastest growing sector there were key issues around not being able to effectively represent and retain members in the same way as in the other sectors especially local government. Similarly it was recognised that becoming active was difficult for people working in the sector due to constraints imposed by employers.

This was a common thread throughout the 3 days and one that delegates discussed at length although there was a real push to come up with positive and constructive ideas in order to improve things for the future.

Friday afternoon concluded with delegates attending one of 4 workshops which were replicated the following day. I had registered onto the Dealing with Stress and Handling TUPE and Reorganisations both of which were interesting but the stress one in particular gave opportunity for delegates to work in groups on case studies.

Saturday morning and late afternoon was dedicated to motions of which there were 17 (some with amendments) and 1 emergency motion. Not all were heard in those two sessions so conference reconvened on the Sunday. This has not always been the case so it is hopefully a sign of more branches submitting motions and delegates participating in the debates.

National women's committee had submitted 2 motions 'Fair treatment for workers in the community and voluntary sector' and 'Low pay in the community sector'. Hopefully I delivered my speeches which reflected both our concern of and commitment to the issues.

There was a panel session Saturday morning – 'everything you wanted to know about UNISON community' which was informative especially useful to new members, not necessarily specifically to joining UNISON but to the sector itself. The session allowed for questions and delegates took ample opportunity to put forward their views about the sector's organising strengths and weaknesses.

We had another key speaker on the Saturday – Anna Turley MP and shadow minister for civil society. We also heard from Josie Bird, NEC, who came to talk about the branch resources review which commenced in 2011. The objective of this review is to provide a

fair, equitable scheme for funding and resourcing branches that is easily understood and branches can support. The overall concept is that branches should be funded on need. Branches will develop a joint budget and workplan and support will be provided for those branches that require additional funds or resources to meet their workplan. The report is to be published prior to NDC.

Higher Education

25 February 2016, Southport

Delegate : Josie Mangan

UNISON president Wendy Nichols chaired the conference. The HE conference was very well turned out; numbers were higher than 2015 conference.

2015 was a difficult year to recruit in higher education. 2015 – 2016 UNISON called for a substantial pay increase in the living wage for all members. 2016 – 2017 a new campaign called 'Invest in Me.'



Josie Mangan

It was said that on the UNISON website, education / schools / further education colleges and higher education were not easy to find – this is a must.

Speaker – Patrick Johnson who is head of equality and diversity at Manchester University. He spoke on the Race Equality Charter; the Athena Swan – a charter for women in sciences/gender needs across the sector. Also the Race Equality Charter Mark – this is looking at improving representation, progression and success of minority ethnic staff and students within higher education.

Motions – There were 18 motions and amendments approved for the conference.

All 18 were presented on the day. There were 2 motions both from the Scottish HE Committee which fell as no-one was there to move them.

I moved motion number 9 – Student Workers - on behalf of the national women's committee.

Healthcare

25-27 April 2016, Brighton

Delegates: Ann Brown, Gail Andrews

Conference was opened on Monday 25 April by our President Wendy Nichols who said she was looking forward to a week of lively debate. Roz Norman, chair of the service group executive committee addressed conference, saying she was immensely proud of what our union has achieved, and that our work is worth far more than 1%. Her address was met with resounding applause from conference.

Dave Prentis, UNISON General Secretary then took to the floor to address conference.

Dave started by saying that our NHS is respected all over the world and that he knew how tough it had been to remain active within the union as well as caring for patients but it's what keeps us together. Dave went on to say that he couldn't promise us that the next few years won't be difficult but our union across the land was making a difference in fighting for justice. UNISON has recruited 166,000 new members. We are training more stewards, and doing more cases. This was also met with resounding applause from conference.

Guest speaker Heidi Alexander then addressed conference, saying that it was a pleasure to be here addressing her first UNISON conference as Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Health.

Heidi stated that if anyone had born the brunt of this Tory government, it was those of us who work in health and care services and that we had had broken promises over pay and attacks on our terms and conditions, and that it was the longest and deepest funding squeeze in the history of the NHS. Heidi went on to say that one of her key priorities for our health and social care system was the workforce.

Tuesday 26 April

Professor Michael West spoke on developing positive workplace cultures in the NHS - if it was left up to me I would roll this out to every workplace for them to take on board.

Professor West talked about how to provide high quality care and health services and that to be compassionate we have to listen to patients, understand them, feel emotion and empathy and take intellectual action, as when we are stressed it's much more difficult to be there with them and take intelligent action to deal with them. It's wrong that we are creating working places that are damaging well being, and that can be exacerbated by bullying and harassment from our managers.

Professor West's belief is that the core of the NHS is compassion but it needs a model of leadership that pays attention to those that lead feeling empathy for those we lead.

Eric Roberts, our president in waiting, read a speech from Dave Prentis regarding the Hillsborough inquest of the 96, saying that at last justice had prevailed. On our screens the following appeared: "UNISON is proud to support the Justice for the 96 campaign. There at the beginning, we will be there at the end." Many of our delegates and speakers were in tears at this news including me.

Motion 31, on the ageing workforce in the NHS, was brought by the national women's committee. Ann Brown moved this motion and delivered it well, and it was well received and carried.

Dr Raj Jethwa, a speaker from the BMA, said that he was pleased to be addressing conference. He explained that the junior doctors were left with no alternative but to strike as there was no resolution and that the new contracts would be putting patients in danger and that it was unworkable. He thanked UNISON members for their continued support during the lengthy dispute. Doctor Jethwa's speech was met by a standing ovation from UNISON Delegates.

Energy

20 June 2016, Brighton

Delegate : Julie Dring

This is quite a small conference with approximately 80 attendees. I moved the following two motions on behalf of the national women's committee, and other delegates spoke in support of both motions:

Motion 2 : The Impact of State Pension Changes on Workers in the Energy Sector.

I talked about pensions being complicated, and that further changes were making it more complicated. I highlighted how this is more likely to affect women due to them taking time out of work for childcare and generally earning less than men.

Motion 5 : Negotiating Workplace Domestic Abuse Policies.

I spoke about how negotiating workplace domestic abuse policies would benefit men and women, although for every one man affected by domestic violence there will be 10 women. More than two women a week are killed by current or ex partners and these figures are rising. In the energy sector UNISON membership is around 75 per cent women, so the issue of domestic abuse is bound to have a significant impact. 1 in 5 women each will take time off due to domestic abuse and so proceed through sickness procedures.

It was very interesting listening to other speakers with their experiences and reasons for supporting the motions, particularly as some of them were speaking from personal experience.

Unfortunately there were a few motions that didn't get heard as there was no one to move them. However, the conference was interesting and informative.

Water, Environment and Transport

19 June 2016, Brighton

Delegate : Anne Roughton

I would just like to say a big thank you to the staff for helping with my speeches. It was my first time speaking at the WET and I would not be able to have done it without them.

I spoke on the impact of pension changes on workers in the WET sector and negotiating workplace domestic abuse policies. Both motions were supported. Unfortunately we did not have any lively debates, although there were some emotional ones.

There were good speeches by delegates on LGBT pensions and the Working Time directive, both motions were supported.

The WET sector was very supportive and friendly and was great to be part of it. It would be nice to see a lot more people and would encourage people to go if they get a chance.

Local Government

19/20 June 2016, Brighton

Delegates : Penny Smith and Jo Morgan

Wendy Nichols, UNISON president, opened conference on Sunday morning with a moving tribute to Jo Cox MP and how she had been on Labour's NEC Select Committee that had approved Jo's selection.

There was also mention of the horrific attack in the nightclub in Orlando and a minute's silence was held for both. Wendy also talked about the referendum that was to be held later in the week and called for us all to watch our language whatever side of the fence we were on. Wendy went on to say that we need to stand in solidarity with our sister unions around the world.

The first part of the annual report was moved by Glenn Williams in his own entertaining and imitable way. Glenn made the report feel real. He talked about losses and gains and specifically mentioned that Stornoway had won the living wage through the hard work and dedication of the UNISON branch. He talked about the savage cuts also especially to libraries and his main message was 'organise, organise, organise'. However, Glenn finished by sharing a very personal story of him being at Hillsborough on the day of the tragedy and that he had been hospitalised from the injuries he had sustained and that the victory at the inquests had meant everything to him. It was incredibly moving.

We then moved onto the business of conference. The first motion of the day was Motion 2: Organising in Local Government in which Penny moved our amendment on why women working in local government are reluctant to identify as 'low paid' even though they meet UNISON's criteria for being low paid and how that may hamper their progression through the union and also any barriers that they might perceive to their more active participation. Penny called on the service group executive to research this. The amendment was duly carried.

After some good speeches including one to re-instate the National Housing Forum, Jo accepted remittance on our amendment 21.1 on term time contracts as government policy had changed. Jo was able to put our case forward regarding worsening terms and conditions for all school support staff in

academies, but acknowledged that the government had backtracked on its proposal.

In the afternoon Heather Wakefield, UNISON head of local government, addressed conference. She spoke out against outsourcing and spoke of its impact on our members. She asked for more local action in opposing cuts. She spoke of the disappointing pay claim and that other unions hadn't wanted to show a united front. She ended by saying that all the cuts in local government had somehow legitimised excessive workloads and bullying.

The first motion of the afternoon called for the Restructure of NJC Green Book pay spine and this motion was passed as delegates felt it no longer served its purpose.

Our first motion proper was motion 32, UNISON local government members supporting refugees. This motion called for support to be given and that that support should be relevant to those helping some of the most vulnerable. Penny moved this speech and there were a number of speakers from the floor in support and the motion was carried.

The afternoon carried on with a very lively debate on the emergency composite A regarding censure of the National Joint Council Committee. The debate was held over until Monday morning and there was a card vote and the vote carried.

Also on Monday morning we heard from Jan Willem Goudriaan, General Secretary of the European Federation of Public Services Unions. Jan said there was a need for an attitude of solidarity in all of Europe. He spoke strongly in opposition of CETA and TTIP. It was good to hear him speak about the TU movement Europe-wide.

Our second motion became part of a composite on local government finance and the NWC were congratulated from the platform for raising this issue as most local government cuts disproportionately affect women. Jo made another inspiring speech with many delegates getting up to speak in support.

Nick Lowles from Hope not Hate was the speaker for the afternoon. He said that the killer of Jo Cox had acted from pure hate and that the authorities did not take the far right seriously enough. He said that if we left the EU it would be a green light for racism. He said the fight against racism must be taken into all communities.

The motions that were passed that had a particular impact on women included:

- Motion 26 – An interesting discussion which identified that many low paid women who fear losing their jobs because of incapability dismissal continue to work in all weathers and health states;
- Motion 4 – Youth Services that provide vital roles and support particularly for young Black women;
- Motion 3 – Single status and equality legislation and the vital roles that are predominantly staffed by women such as nurses, carers, midwives etc. The gender pay gap particularly on these groups;
- Motion 28 – Bullying and young members.

Conference was very good and there was quite a lot of debate which is always nice to see.

Police and Justice

6-8 October, Southport

Delegates : Mary Halligan and Elisa Vasquez-Walters

Probation Perspective - Elisa Vasquez-Walters
Police and Justice (P&J) conference is quite split between police and probation and

myself and Mary attended as representatives from these two sectors. It was probably the smallest P&J conference I had seen in a few years with probation staff totalling less than 40 members. As yet I am unsure if this equates to a decline in membership or to problems with facility time etc. Nevertheless it was going to prove to be a lively conference with lots of strong arguments about some very important issues.

Thursday saw conference being welcomed to Southport by the new presidential team including our national women's committee's own Margaret McKee. Eric Roberts, president, announced his chosen charity which is the Blue Light Programme of Mind; a specific programme of the mental health charity which supports staff from the emergency services, apparently a section of the workforce which are more likely than the average population to suffer from mental health problems but less likely than average to seek support! I thought that this was an excellent choice of charity to support.

We went promptly into debating motions, beginning with the ever growing concern of the use of volunteers in policing, a practice which is spreading way beyond policing and has huge pitfalls and consequences for all involved.

The first probation specific motion, Number 4 from the North West Probation and Cafcass branch, on retaining the existing structure for collective bargaining, caused some fierce debate on both sides, even causing our national officer, Ben Priestley to talk against it! I spoke against this motion, even though I had not planned to speak on it and found myself telling police staff members that if they weren't 100% sure what they were voting on that they should abstain. Luckily the motion fell which meant that a further probation motion could stay on the agenda.

I also spoke in support of the motion from the national Black members' committee around Black worker representation in P&J workforces.

I feel very strongly that our justice system has such a long way to go when it comes to representing the communities it serves, yet its client base is over represented by Black people due to systemic racism throughout, that I felt it hugely important to talk on this one. This was unanimously passed with some great speakers on the subject.

Our motion on health and safety in the probation service was well supported with speakers in support having some shocking tales to tell about the decline in safe working practices and environments since the service was privatised. This was unanimously passed as was our second motion on flexible working in the police service which was expertly moved by Mary. I spoke again on the motion that remained as a result of motion 4 falling which was once again fiercely debated but was eventually carried.

Due to the relatively small amount of motions all of the business was completed on the Thursday leaving the other 2 days for workshops.

The Probation specific workshops were all very useful covering professionalism in probation following the split from the Probation Institute, E3 an Update from Jim Barton, a senior civil servant (who got a thorough roasting!!), a workshop from the head of NOMS, Michael Spurr who gave us an update on the 'progress' (or lack of) of the Transforming Rehabilitation programme. We also had a workshop on the future of pay and on the future of collective bargaining.

All in all I felt it was a good conference despite the small number of probation colleagues there.

Police perspective- Mary Halligan

I totally agree with Elisa. I've been attending P&J Conference for almost 10 years and this year I noted it was particularly poorly attended. I noted also that despite many well deserved motions there was a lack of speakers either in support or against. For the police sector we debated motions relating to the concern within branches at the number of volunteer groups being used. These group of people bring with them many issues, not in the least taking valued employment from their communities but also how to manage their behaviour; vetting issues; complaints made against them; etc.

Motions 7 and 8 referred to equality issues. 7 related to, in part, an ageing workforce and also those members with disabilities who may find themselves with no protection from dismissal on grounds of capability when they can no longer do their front-line posts. Motion 8 was more general and encouraged conference to gather information and use it to emphasise how the CSR's have impacted on equality training.

I moved motion 12 'an inflexible police service' on behalf of the national women's committee. This is a huge issue for our colleagues in the police sector. I was humbled by the examples given by speakers and felt confident to address this issue which is very close to my heart and is impacting on a number of my members back in the branch.

I drew on research from ACAS and the guidance from College of Policing to emphasise how a poor balance between an employee's work commitments and other responsibilities can lead to stress, high absenteeism and low productivity.

The blue light proposals were debated. This was also picked up in my workshop 'policing and crime bill'. Those in my workshop expressed concern that some forces were already in the process of collaborating; co-locating police and fire staff.

One woman stated that her force had already recruited PCSO's who were omni-competent and trained to attend to fires also!! Another aspect of the bill is the extension of police powers to staff and volunteers. Ben Priestley referred to the recent survey where the majority asked stated that they wanted extended powers.

A discussion ensued whereby most people felt that this was blurring the lines between what a police staff member was recruited for e.g. community engagement and what a police officer was recruited for e.g. law and order. The Bill is currently with the House of Lords and we were encouraged to write to our MPs when it reaches the House of Commons.

We also had a full update from Colin Meech on our Local Government Pension Scheme. Colin encouraged everyone there to get more involved in the proposed changes ahead.

Saturday morning we had a full update on the Police Staff Council Handbook national negotiations.

It was a very intense conference with lots of information to note and bring back to our respective branches and committees.

Thank you for the opportunity to attend and represent the national women's committee.

TUC women's conference

9-11 March 2016, Congress House, London

The UNISON delegation was led by Wendy Nicholls, president. Carol Sewell, vice president, Lucia McKeever and Eleanor Smith (NEC members and TUC women's committee members) also attended, along with Gloria Mills as the general secretary's representative.

Representatives attended from Eastern, East Midlands, Northern, North West, Scotland,

South West, Wales, West Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside regions, also the Chair of the NWC.

Additionally, Liz Snape, UNISON assistant general secretary and president of the TUC attended and addressed conference, as did Davena Rankin (UNISON Scotland) as chair of the STUC women's committee.



Liz Snape, TUC president 2016

Fringe Meeting

A Labour Party/Unions Together consultation event on women's representation took place, with the national women's officer facilitating one group at the request of Labour Link. Kate Green MP addressed the meeting, followed by discussion groups on how to increase women's representation and engagement with the Party.

UNISON motions

The UNISON motions on women's access to justice and low pay in the care sector were both carried. The amendment to motion 1 – women organising against the Trade Union Bill, became part of composite 1, which was subsequently chosen as the women's conference motion to congress.

UNISON delegates also spoke on the motions on flexible working in education, stress in the NHS, funding for women's health services and the value of maternity services and tackling child poverty.

APPENDIX 1

MEMBERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE 2015/2016

Regional Representatives

Eastern	Barbara Staddon, Elisa Vasquez-Walters
East Midlands	Rosie Bartram, Penny Smith
Greater London	Amanda Bailey, Josie Mangan
Northern	Pat Heron, Shirley Scott
Northern Ireland	Ann Brown, Roisin McKinley
North West	Elizabeth Cameron, Rona Ellison, Angela Greenhalgh
Scotland	Norma Black, Davena Rankin, (Viv Thomson until March)
South East	Shaaron Coward, Debbie Hollingsworth
South West	Kym Bayley, Jo Morgan
Cymru / Wales	Jane Gebbie, Mary Halligan
West Midlands	Jennifer Forbes, Sarah Feeney/Paulette Whyte (job share)
Yorkshire & Humberside	Gail Andrews, Elaine Shelton, Pam Sian

Others

National Black Members' Committee	Margaret Greer (September/November), Pam Singh (Elizabeth Baptiste until September)
National Disabled Members' Committee	Cath McGuinness, Hilary Mellor
National LGBT Committee	Angelique Denys, Natalie Roberts (from September) (Jade-Sue Armstrong, Carrie Pearson Loughlin until September)
Young Members Forum	Kendal Bromley-Bewes
NEC	Elizabeth Baptiste (from September), Margaret McKee, Lynne Poulton
TUC co-optees	Lucia McKeever, Eleanor Smith

Staff

National Women's Officer	Sharon Greene
Assistant National Officer	Clare Knights

APPENDIX 2

Constitution of the national women's committee

Representation

Regions with up to 100,000 women members	Two seats
Regions with more than 100,000 women members	Three seats
Other self-organised groups (SOGs)	Two for each national committee
National young members forum (NYMF)	One seat
National executive council	Three seats

All posts are open to job share.

Each region and self-organised group may nominate a substitute.

When electing representatives, regions are reminded of the requirement to achieve fair representation for the low paid, part time workers, shift workers, Black women, disabled women, lesbians, bisexual and transgender women. Where regions are entitled to three representatives, the third seat must take into account fair representation.

Term of office: The committee is elected every two years, taking office after national women's conference.

Length of service: Regional, SOG and NYMF representatives shall serve no more than two consecutive terms on the committee. This is to encourage and enable more women to become involved in UNISON activities at a national level.

Once a regional, SOG or NYMF representative has served on the national women's committee, they must take a break of at least one two-year term before they are eligible for re-election either as a full member or substitute to the national women's committee, regardless of their nominating body.

Quorum: The quorum for meetings of the committee will be no less than one third of the members, excluding the chair.

Meetings: The committee will meet no less than four times annually. Further meetings will be held on the recommendation of the committee.

AGM: The annual general meeting of the committee will be the first meeting after national women's conference.

Chair and vice-chairs: The chair and two vice-chairs shall be elected by the committee at the AGM.

Voting: Voting will be by show of hands. A ballot can be held on more sensitive issues, with the consent of the majority of the committee. In the event of a tied vote, the chair will have the casting vote.

Minutes: The minutes of the previous meeting will be circulated at least 14 days prior to the meeting. These will be scrutinised for accuracy and, if accepted, signed as a true record.

APPENDIX 3

Attendance at meetings of the national women's committee

Meetings were held in March, September and November

Nominating Body	Name	Possible	Actual
Eastern	Barbara Staddon	3	3
Eastern	Elisa Vasquez-Walters	3	3
East Midlands	Rosie Bartram	3	2
East Midlands	Penny Smith	3	3
Greater London	Amanda Bailey	3	2
Greater London	Josie Mangan	3	1
Northern	Pat Heron	3	3
Northern	Shirley Scott	3	3
Northern Ireland	Ann Brown	3	3
Northern Ireland	Roisin McKinley	3	3
North West	Elizabeth Cameron	3	2
North West	Rona Ellison	3	1
North West	Angela Greenhalgh	3	2
Scotland	Norma Black	3	3
Scotland	Davena Rankin	3	3
Scotland	Pat Rowland (Sub)	2	2
Scotland	Viv Thomson (until 3/16)	1	1
South East	Shaaron Coward	3	2
South East	Debbie Hollingsworth	3	2
South West	Kym Bayley	3	3
South West	Jo Morgan	3	2
Cymru / Wales	Jane Gebbie	3	3
Cymru / Wales	Mary Halligan	3	2
West Midlands	Jennifer Forbes	3	3
West Midlands	Sarah Feeney (job share)	1	1
West Midlands	Paulette Whyte (job share)	2	2
Yorkshire & Humberside	Gail Andrews	3	3
Yorkshire & Humberside	Elaine Shelton	3	2
Yorkshire & Humberside	Pam Sian	3	2
NBMC	Elizabeth Baptiste (until 3/16)	1	0
NBMC	Margaret Greer (from 9/16)	2	2
NBMC	Isht Raouf (sub)	1	1
NBMC	Pam Singh	3	3
NDMC	Cath McGuinness	3	3
NDMC	Hilary Mellor	3	3
LGBT	Jade-Sue Armstrong	1	1
LGBT	Carrie Pearson-Loughlin	1	0
LGBT	Natalie Roberts (from 9/16)	2	1
LGBT	Angelique Denys (from 11/16)	1	1
Young Members Forum	Kendal Bromley-Bewes	3	1
NEC	Elizabeth Baptiste (from 9/16)	2	1
NEC	Margaret McKee	3	3
NEC	Lynn Poulton	3	2
TUC	Lucia McKeever	3	1
TUC	Eleanor Smith	3	2

APPENDIX 4

Glossary

D&O	NEC's development and organisation committee
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
FRMC	Finance & resource management committee (UNISON)
LAOS	Learning and organising services (UNISON department responsible for member training)
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
LLL	Lifelong learning
MPU	Membership participation unit (UNISON department with equalities remit)
NBMC	National Black members' committee
NDC	National delegate conference
NDMC	National disabled members' committee
NEC	National executive council
NEC ELC	National executive council equality liaison committee
NWC	National women's committee
NWO	National women's officer
NYMF	National young members' forum
PDCC	NEC's policy development and campaigns committee
RWC	Regional women's committee
RWO	Regional women's officer
SOG	Self organised group
TUC	Trades Union Congress

Commonly used terms

Self organisation	Groups facing discrimination meeting and organising to determine their collective agenda and feeding it into UNISON's structure.
SOGs	The four self-organised groups: defined by UNISON national rules as women members, Black members, disabled members and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members.
Positive action	Action to combat the prejudice and discrimination experienced by members of the self-organised groups.
Self-definition	Right of people to define themselves, e.g. as disabled or lesbian.
Proportionality	The representation of women and men in fair proportion to the relevant number of female and male members of the electorate – UNISON has a rulebook commitment to proportionality.
Fair representation	The broad balance of representation of members of the electorate, taking into account such factors as age and low pay, the balance between full-time and part-time time workers, manual and non-manual workers, different occupations, skills, race, sexual orientation, disability and gender identity – UNISON has a rulebook commitment to fair representation.

UNISON Organisation

National delegate conference	Supreme decision-making body of UNISON – annual conference of branch delegates at which the self-organised groups have representation.
NEC	National Executive Council – elected body of lay members.
Lay member	A member who is not an employee of the union.
Lay structure	A body that does not consist of employees of the union.
Regions	UNISON is organised into 12 regions around the country, each with their own regional office and staff.
Service groups	<p>UNISON organises members in the following services – energy, health care, higher education, local government, police staff, transport, community and water and environment.</p> <p>The service group has autonomy to decide the group’s general policy and negotiate on behalf of their members. Each service group has an annual conference of delegates which sets the group’s agenda for the following year.</p>
Sector	A sub-group of a service group, e.g. the nursing and midwives sector of the healthcare service group.
Code of good branch practice	A set of guidelines, including a chapter on self-organisation, drawn up by the NEC which it considers desirable for branches to follow.
UNISON InFocus	Monthly magazine for stewards and activists
UNISON efocus	Weekly email to stewards and activists
U magazine	Quarterly magazine for all members
Labour link levy	A fund made up of contributions from opted-in members used to support the Labour Party.
GPF	General political fund: A fund made up of contributions from opted-in members used for non party-political campaigning.

APPENDIX 5

NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE 2016 PROPORTIONALITY AND FAIR REPRESENTATION DATA

374 Respondents	%
% who had attended conference before	59.09%
% who described their gender as female	94.65%
Ethnic origin of delegates	96.26%
Asian UK	0.27%
Asian Other	
Bangladeshi	
Indian	0.27%
Pakistani	1.07%
Black African	0.80%
Black Caribbean	4.28%
Black UK	2.14%
Black Other	
Black Mixed Heritage	0.27%
Chinese	
Irish	2.94%
White UK	76.74%
White Other	6.42%
Other Mixed Heritage	1.07%
% who identified as:	
Disabled	18.98%
Lesbian	5.35%
Gay	
Bisexual	6.95%
Transgender	0.80%
% who participate in self organised groups	18.58%
Women members	51.34%
Lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender members	5.61%
Black members	8.29%
Disabled members	9.09%
Length of time as a UNISON member	97.06%
0 - 2 years	5.08%
3 - 5 years	10.16%
6 - 10 years	21.93%
11+ years	59.89%

Service Group	13.71%
Community	2.94%
Local Government	43.05%
Energy	2.41%
Police and Justice	8.82%
Health Care	30.48%
Water, Environment and Transport	2.14%
Higher Education	6.15%
Sector	31.64%
Public sector	86.10%
Private sector	6.95%
Voluntary sector	1.87%
Occupational group	10.61%
Managers	5.88%
Professional	33.69%
Administrators	17.38%
Other non-manual	3.48%
Technical	2.14%
Personal & caring services	12.83%
Clerical & secretarial	7.22%
Other manual	5.35%
Other occupation	7.49%
Age group	91.44%
16 - 26 (9 members)	2.41%
27 - 39	12.03%
40 - 49	26.20%
50+	50.80%
Subscription band	94.65%
A Up to 2,000	0.80%
B 2,001 - 5,000	0.53%
C 5,001 - 8,000	2.67%
D 8,001 - 11,000	4.55%
E 11,001 - 14,000	8.29%
F 14,001 - 17,000	8.82%
G 17,001 - 20,000	12.57%
H 20,001 - 25,000	25.40%
I 25,001 - 30,000	16.04%
J 30,001 - 35,000	9.09%
K over 35,000	5.88%
Member in Education/Apprenticeship	
Member on unpaid leave	
Retired member	0.80%

Working hours per week	95.99%
35 hours or more	70.32%
30 - 34 hours	10.16%
16 - 29 hours	13.64%
Less than 16 hours	1.87%
 National committee membership	 3.63%
National Executive Council	3.48%
National Service Group Executive	5.61%
National Self-organised Group Committee	8.56%
National Labour Link Committee	1.07%
National Young Members' Forum	0.80%
National Retired Members' Committee	0.53%
Other National Committee	5.35%
 Regional committee membership	 12.13%
Regional Council	28.88%
Regional Committee	26.47%
Regional Service Group Executive	10.96%
Regional Self-organised Group Committee	18.45%
Regional Young Members' Forum	1.60%
Regional Labour Link Committee	6.95%
Regional Retired Members' Committee	0.53%
Other	3.21%
 Branch posts held	 9.26%
Chairperson	10.70%
Treasurer	4.55%
Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator	1.60%
Health & Safety Officer	5.35%
International Officer	2.14%
Young Members' Officer	0.80%
Steward	41.98%
Secretary	13.64%
Education Co-ordinator	6.68%
Equality Co-ordinator	8.56%
Communications Officer	2.41%
Membership Officer	5.08%
Welfare Officer	8.02%
Other	18.18%

